

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

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If farmers like Eric Klein are to raise hogs out of the mainstream, they need creativity, cutting-edge information...and connections with other farmers. (see page 10)

—A New Era for Ag—

—Farm Beginnings Deadline Aug. 1—

—Opportunity Knocks, What's the Answer?—

—Threats to Local Control—

—Post-Graduate Beginning Farmers—

—The Valley of Giants—

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—Perennial Land, Leavings, Sturgeon—



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Enabling a new era of ag

By George Boody

How can farmers around the world produce enough food to satisfy the needs and desires of 9 billion humans by 2050, in ways that can be sustained in the long-term?

The *Economist* magazine argued in a recent series that the only way is to maximize production via large-scale, specialized systems reliant on monocultures, petroleum-based fertilizers, pesticides and engineered crops — which just happen to be good for corporate profits. The *Economist*'s argument is that diversified systems — including organic cropping and pasture-based livestock — are a “luxury” the developing world can ill afford. But could we meet the challenge with organic and diversified systems if levels of public and private investment matched that for industrial approaches? It is a question we must pursue as we confront the myriad of problems associated with corporate-controlled agriculture.

For now, reliance on high-cost industrial systems provides humans, in theory, with enough calories on a per capita basis. Still, one billion go hungry every year or lack adequate access to food, especially in Africa and even in the U.S. One in seven people in industrialized countries in 2000 were clinically obese, with diet-related diseases rising at alarming levels. High nitrogen fertilizer use results, in part, in over 500 hypoxic aquatic zones worldwide.

Despite the expectation of high profits for Midwestern row crop farmers in 2011, some farmers are looking for alternatives to raising more monocultures of corn and soybeans. That isn't surprising when one considers that producing conventional yields is increasingly expensive and problematic. The price of engineered seeds keeps rising as biotech companies consolidate, and herbicide resistant “super weeds” are a problem we can no longer ignore.

Despite the rhetoric to the contrary, viable options do exist. The Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trial found that in good years organic systems produced corn and soybean yields that were 90 to 98 percent as good as their conventional counterparts. Similar trials in Iowa, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Michigan show that in good years average organic corn yields were

90 to 114 percent of conventional yields.

The agriculture of the future may be a mix of conventional and organic systems, with animals and agroforestry spread out over the landscape, and perennial plant systems integrated into farms. A more diverse balance is quite achievable in the short term. For example, the University of Minnesota showed that one typical four-year rotation — corn, soybeans, alfalfa and oats — can produce 3 percent to 6 percent higher yields for conventional farmers who want to stick with at least some chemicals for the time being. Iowa State University showed that four-year rotations using manure and few external inputs had similar yields to

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As we approach our third decade of existence, LSP is excited about the opportunities for enabling the transition to a more sustainable food and farming system.

• • •

two-year rotations, while storing more soil carbon and reducing energy use.

An extensive review of the scientific literature published in the past five years was released in December by a United Nation's “right to food” specialist. It concluded that farming systems based on agroecology — fewer chemicals, more biodiversity, smaller farms, participatory strategies, the involvement of women in farming — offer the best opportunity for achieving highly productive farming that protects fragile environments and makes progress on growing enough food affordably. For example, in Bangladesh a rice production system that combined elimination of pesticides and the use of fish and ducks for pest control resulted in increased production while allowing vegetables to be grown on the dikes.

A previous UN report identified organic and low-input sustainable agricultural systems as significantly improving yields and well-being in Africa. The challenge, say UN experts, is “scaling up” by enabling a “transition towards low external input and sustainable agriculture in all regions.”

LSP's role in the new agriculture

As this and every issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* illustrates, the Land Steward-

ship Project is working on several fronts to scale-up and enable a more sustainable food and farming system.

This requires public policies that pay for public goods, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), a USDA initiative intended to reward farmers whose systems result in cleaner water, improved soil health and biodiversity. LSP is working to improve the program and see it continue. A new agriculture will require more, not fewer, farmers, as we switch from input-intensive to management-intensive systems. As we describe on page 17, LSP's Farm Beginnings is now examining how we can help graduates beyond the classroom, facilitating their transition into successful entrepreneurial operations.

Livestock on the land play an integral role in developing a truly sustainable agriculture here in the Upper Midwest and around the world. That requires fair, competitive markets for farmers and ranchers. That is why LSP is advancing enforcement of the USDA rules related to livestock marketing (page 15).

Enabling a transition to sustainable modes of production is becoming less of a choice, and more of a necessity. As E. Ann Clark, a retired professor of plant agriculture at the University of Guelph, argues, agriculture has evolved over the decades in response to “drivers.” Dominant drivers over the years include cheap energy, readily available fresh water and a stable climate. Major drivers also include consumer desires for grain-fed animal products, biofuels, too few corporations controlling everything from seeds to the markets farmers sell into, and the willingness of farmers and society to tolerate externalized costs.

These drivers are shifting, and with great change comes great opportunity. For example, consumers' interest in eating high quality food produced through good stewardship is an exciting, relatively new driver. That's why LSP is tackling such practical issues as transporting food from the field to the fork (pages 26-27) and connections between local food and human health (pages 24-25).

As we approach our third decade of existence, LSP is excited about the opportunities for enabling the transition to a more sustainable food and farming system. As members, your vision, direction, participation and support are essential to advancing healthy food and successful family farms firmly rooted in stewardship, fairness, justice and vibrant communities. □

George Boody is LSP's Executive Director. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or gboody@landstewardshipproject.org.

Letters

Agri-Growth has drifted from its roots

I liked your update on the *Troubled Waters* controversy in the Autumn 2010 issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* (pages 14-15). It helped get the entire story into perspective in a step-by-step way and filled in some blank spots for me. It was too bad the University of Minnesota took the initial action it did because the research being reviewed in the film seemed well balanced and well documented with positive results in making more efficient use of nutrients and reducing run-off. Those positive results got lost in all the brouhaha. I liked especially that a lot of this effort to utilize nitrogen most effectively appeared to be farmer-led.

As to the Agri-Growth Council being used as a prime promoter of industrialized farming, that certainly isn't what it was originally designed to do. I was involved in the origin of the Council; the late Harold Swanson of the U of M's St. Paul campus information office and I wrote the promotional brochure to help get it started. Its original purpose was to bring agricultural associations and organizations together in a united voice on issues affecting agriculture.

Not all in agriculture would agree on every issue, but those commodity groups, farm organizations, etc., that did agree could, we hoped, join together, via the Council, as an "umbrella" type federation interested in the welfare of all segments of agriculture, small as well as large.

— **Robert G. Rupp**
Editor Emeritus
The Farmer magazine

Worker rights matter

Thank you very much for your immigrant worker rights article in the Autumn 2010 issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* (pages 12-13). My husband and I are members and supporters of the Land Stewardship Project and are excited to see how forward-thinking the organization is. The topic you covered so well in your article is a timely and important one. You did an excellent job, in a short article, of touching on why we should care about these issues.

We appreciate the work you do.

— **Gina & Sean Johnson**
South St. Paul, Minn.

Is 'feeding the world' about morals or markets?

The president of Minnesota Farm Bureau was quoted last year saying that, in view of projected increases in world population from 6.5 to 9 billion by 2050, Midwestern farmers have a moral responsibility to reach 300 bushels per acre corn yield — soon. More mouths will require more food. The alternative is more hungry people.

While such assertions make a certain amount of sense, they oversimplify the problem of hunger and too conveniently offer a solution which coincides with the financial interests of commercial American farmers. Agricultural columnist Alan Guebert hit the issue squarely by stating that most farmers, and especially the large commercial operations represented by Farm Bureau and commodity organizations, are interested in making money. Period. All the hokum about feeding the hungry is simply an attempt to dress self-interest in the garb of its opposite, compassion.

Suppose for the sake of argument that increasing the amount of corn produced in the United States would appreciably reduce hunger in the world. If this were the case, U.S. agriculture could make an immediate large contribution to feeding the world by ceasing to convert one-third of the nation's crop to ethanol. This would be a financial sacrifice, a truly moral act in its intention to feed suffering, hungry people.

However, it is debatable whether there is a positive correlation between the amount of corn produced in or exported from the United States, and world hunger. Seventy-five percent of the people who are vulnerable to hunger in the world live on less than

a dollar a day in rural areas. Their main livelihood is small scale agriculture. Organizations devoted to ending hunger, such as Bread for the World, argue strenuously against policies that subsidize commodity production in the U.S. and Europe, resulting in export of cheap food that undermines potential markets for indigenous food production in developing countries. Perhaps an unintended benefit of ethanol-induced \$7-per-bushel corn is a temporary end to "dumping" of surplus production in developing countries at prices below the cost of production.

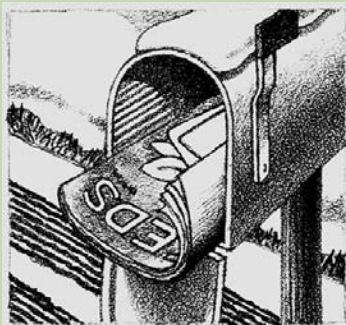
Any serious attempt to feed the world's hungry must deal with the twin drivers of hunger: lack of access to food, and lack of money to buy it. Many development experts advocate local, sustainable food production by small landholders in developing countries as a means of addressing both.

Eventually, when this strategy begins to succeed, and small farmers increase their incomes by producing for a reliable local market that is not undercut by cheap, subsidized imports, demand for U.S. corn may well increase as people upgrade their diets to include more meat, as have many Asian consumers in recent years.

An American agricultural policy to support such a long-term strategy, accompanied by short-term disaster assistance, would demonstrate wisdom, compassion and moral responsibility, and may well be optimal for food producers worldwide.

— **Norman Senjem**
Rochester, Minn.

What's on your mind?



Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms?

We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Commentaries and letters published in the *Land Stewardship Letter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.

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Daily Planet lauded for *Troubled Waters* coverage

The *Twin Cities Daily Planet* was recently honored with a 2010 Premack Award for Public Journalism for its coverage of the U of M's attempt to censor the film *Troubled Waters* last fall.

After the *Daily Planet* broke the initial *Troubled Waters* story, the Land Steward-

ship Project worked with numerous groups and media outlets to shine a light on the controversy and its connections to the University's bias against sustainable family farming. See the Autumn 2010 *Land Stewardship Letter* for more details on the controversy. □

Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

→ **Myth:** Banning subtherapeutic use of antibiotics in livestock production will be an economic disaster for farmers.

→ **Fact:**

For more than half-a-century, antibiotics have played a major role in the production of livestock in this

country. That drugs are used to treat sick animals is no big surprise. What the general public may not be aware of is that in hog operations, for example, low levels of antibiotics are key ingredients in animal feed. This “subtherapeutic” use of antibiotics helps livestock deal with the stress of intense confinement, while boosting productivity. As a result, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration estimates that 80 percent of the antibiotics produced in the U.S. are used in the livestock industry.

Unfortunately, administering low dosages of drugs over an extended period of time provides the perfect environment for creating “super bacteria” that can’t be killed with regular dosages of antibiotics. Low dosages kill some but not all of the bacteria. The ones that survive do so for good reason: they have genetic mutations that make them resistant to the antibiotic. They can then go on to reproduce and exchange genes with other microbial resisters.

As *Scientific American* recently editorialized: “You could not design a better system for guaranteeing the spread of antibiotic resistance.”

That’s why health care professionals are calling for greater restrictions on the use of subtherapeutic dosages of antibiotics in livestock production. Numerous studies have shown a significant rise in the growth of antibiotic resistant bacteria in recent decades, an indication that over-use of pharmaceuticals is threatening to return us to the dark ages pre-penicillin, when people died from even the most basic infections. (It should be pointed out that humans are part of the problem as well—receiving antibiot-

ics for treatment of a viral ailment such as the common cold, for example, is another way we create the perfect environment for spawning drug-resistant super-bugs.)

The industrialized livestock industry has resisted all attempts to ban or even significantly restrict subtherapeutic use of antibiotics, arguing that it would deal a crippling economic blow to farmers.

But one country’s experience with restricting drug use says otherwise. Since 1995, Denmark has imposed increasingly tighter restrictions on the use of antibiotics in the production of pigs, poultry and other livestock. Today, subtherapeutic use of antimicrobials in Danish livestock production is banned.

The result? A study of the Danish swine industry from 1992 to 2008 found that the post-subtherapeutic Danish pork industry is producing more pigs per sow, and the average daily gain of those pigs is higher. The mortality rates for weaning and finishing pigs were similar in 1992 and 2008. Denmark remains the world’s leading exporter of pork.

These results suggest “that long-term swine productivity was not negatively impacted by a ban on [antimicrobial growth promoter] use,” concluded the study, which was published in the July 2010 issue of the *American Journal of Veterinary Research*.

A couple of caveats: First, there are indications that therapeutic use of drugs to treat sick animals has gone up in Denmark since the ban. But therapeutic use is much less likely to lead to super-bugs than subtherapeutic use. Denmark’s overall antibiotic use in all livestock production is still 40 percent lower than when the ban was initiated.

And there were some initial bumps along the way for Danish pork producers in making the transition to dropping subtherapeutics. For one thing, the average weight of newborn pigs fell at first, and mortality rates went up. But then farmers started making adjustments

in their animal husbandry techniques. One change was to leave the sows and piglets together longer to bolster the litters’ immune systems naturally, and to give the pigs more room to move around. Some farmers also switched from the use of slatted floors to deep bedding made from straw and other dry material. This latter strategy helps manage waste as a relatively dry material rather than as liquid manure, creating a less stressful environment for the pigs.

The lesson is clear: there is a reason subtherapeutics are used in intensive confinement systems—they help animals deal with the rigors of being crowded onto concrete slatted floors over liquid manure pits. Production systems (*see page 10*) that allow animals to live in a more natural environment can help make the crutch of subtherapeutic antibiotics unnecessary.

→ **More information:**

- For more on the paper, “Changes in the use of antimicrobials and the effects on productivity of swine farms in Denmark,” see the July 2010 issue of the *American Journal of Veterinary Medicine* at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20594073.

- The March 30, 2010, edition of *Scientific American* comments (“Our Big Pig Problem”) on Denmark’s experience with banning low-dosage microbial in livestock: www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=our-big-pig-problem.

Myth Busters on the Internet

- You can download pdf versions of Myth Busters at www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth. For paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

Listen to Don Huber talk about Roundup/glyphosate

The Summer 2010 *Land Stewardship Letter* featured a *Myth Buster* on the threat Roundup herbicide (glyphosate) poses to the long-term health of the soil.

Now you can listen to a special presentation given by plant pathologist Don Huber,

the Purdue University emeritus professor who has been researching some of the problems associated with continued use of the weed killer. The Land Stewardship Project’s Julia Ahlers Ness and Richard Ness recorded Huber during a talk he gave in Nebraska on

March 24.

To listen in, check out the Land Stewardship Project’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast at www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html—it’s episodes 98-102. □



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LSP News

2011 LSP Family Farm Breakfast & Day at the Capitol draws 300

Over 300 people attended the Land Stewardship Project's sixth annual Family Farm Breakfast and Day at the Capitol Feb. 15 at Christ Lutheran Church in Saint Paul, Minn.

During the breakfast, LSP members and friends shared tables with lawmakers and government officials as they dined on food produced by area farmers.

Farm Beginnings graduates Josh and Sally Reinitz (*see pages 18-19*) told breakfast participants about their experiences launching a Community Supported Agriculture operation on their family's former dairy farm.

Jim Falk, a western Minnesota farmer, spoke about the work of LSP's State Policy Committee to promote legislation that sup-

ports family farms, sustainable agriculture, a clean environment, rural communities and local food systems. He said the University of Minnesota has the potential to play a major role in promoting farming systems that are good for the environment and local economies.

"LSP has been engaged in dialogue with the University on different programs that promote sustainable farming practices and organic farming practices, and we want to see those programs continue," said Falk.

Al Levine, dean of the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, talked about the role the school could play in promoting a type of agriculture that balances food production with environmental health.

"Stewardship is a very important part of growing our food and fuel," said Levine, adding that research that supports sustainable ag requires support from the public.

Breakfast, see page 7



Al Levine, the dean of the U of M's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, talked about the importance of publicly funded research. (*LSP photo*)



Lawmakers shared a meal of locally produced food with LSP members from across Minnesota. (*LSP photo*)

The Family Farm Breakfast

The chef

→ Brad Beal

The food

- Sausage: Hidden Stream Farm
- Eggs & sausage: Earth Be Glad Farm
- Sausage: Farm on Wheels/Cozy Meadows
- Bacon: Pastures A' Plenty
- Coffee: Equal Exchange
- Bacon: Niman Ranch
- Honey: Honey & Herbs



- Milk & cream: Cedar Summit Farm
- Eggs: EarthRise Farm
- Oatmeal: Dry Weather Creek Farm
- Muffins & rolls: Benson's Bakery
- Milk, cream & butter: Organic Valley Midwest
- Butter: PastureLand
- Apple Cider: Pinetree Apple Orchard
- Bagels & Cream: Common Roots Café
- Sausage: Lucky Pig Berkshire Pork
- Raspberries: Seven Story Farm
- Eggs: Callister Farms (donated by Seward Co-op)

"I'm sure for many of you in this room, the whole notion of public funding is important to maintain an unbiased, unprejudiced, well-researched approach towards agricultural sciences," said the dean.

Rep. Rod Hamilton (R-Mountain Lake), Chair of the House Agriculture Committee, spoke to the breakfast attendees about his authorship of an LSP-backed bill that would provide tax credits to landowners who sell or rent land to beginning farmers. He said small family farmers need programs in place to help them pass their enterprises on to the next generation.

"The biggest part of that is having access to capital," Hamilton said.

After the breakfast, LSP members walked over to the Capitol to lobby Senators and Representatives about issues related to beginning farmers, local township control of development and environmental review of large livestock operations. □

For more on the 2011 session of the Minnesota Legislature, see pages 11 and 13.



Over 50 LSP volunteers pitched in to, among other things, serve food, sign-in participants and help with clean-up after the breakfast. (LSP photo)

Lesnar moves on

Land Stewardship Project Policy Program organizer **Sarah Lesnar** has left the staff and moved to Montana. Lesnar joined LSP's staff as a Policy organizer in 2009 and worked on state, local and federal issues. She also organized the 2010 Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol. □



Sarah Lesnar

Smith joins staff

Megan Smith is the Land Stewardship Project's new membership assistant. She recently earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota in agricultural education, leadership and communications, with a minor in soil science.



Megan Smith

In 2010 Smith interned with LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program. She has worked at a food co-op, as a landscape crew supervisor, veterinary assistant and graphic consultant. Smith is also working part-time as a farm educator at Gale Woods Farm in Minnetrista, Minn.

Smith is based in LSP's Twin Cities office and can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Cioffi joins LSP organizing team

Anna Cioffi has joined the Land Stewardship Project's staff as a Policy Program organizer. Cioffi has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and planning from

Binghamton University in New York.

She has worked as a field director for America Votes, a campus organizer for Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, and an organizing consultant for Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive. Cioffi has undergone extensive organizer training through various groups, and has volunteered for numerous organizations, including LSP.



Anna Cioffi

She is based in LSP's Twin Cities office and can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or annac@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Booth-Tobin, Miller serve LSP internships



Jane Booth-Tobin

Jane Booth-Tobin and **Keith Miller** served internships with the Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program this winter.

Booth-Tobin has a degree in political science and French from Wellesley College in Wellesley, Mass., and has worked as an organizer and researcher for TakeAction Minnesota, Pass the Minnesota Health Plan and Hart Research, among others.

During her internship, Booth-Tobin coordinated LSP's 2011 Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol (see page 6). This spring she took a full-time position with TakeAction Minnesota as a communications associate.

Miller has a degree in history from Bethel University and is enrolled at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Policy. He has worked as a program officer and project officer for Food for the Hungry in Thailand and Uganda, and a recruitment associate for YouthWorks! in Minneapolis.



Keith Miller

During his internship, Miller organized and conducted research related to livestock competition issues and the Conservation Stewardship Program. □

Jackson named an Oxfam 'Sister'

The Land Stewardship Project's **Dana Jackson** was recently named an Oxfam "Sisters on the Planet" ambassador. This is a movement of powerful women and men who are teaming up with Oxfam to help women around the world fight hunger, poverty, and climate change.

On March 4, LSP and Jackson joined with Oxfam America and others to host a meal at the University of Minnesota where attendees met Haitian farmer Jacqueline Morette, learned how women are feeding the world, and had an opportunity to take action.



Dana Jackson

For more on the Sisters on the Planet initiative, see www.oxfamamerica.org/whoware/sisters-on-the-planet.

Jackson coordinates the St. Croix River Buy Fresh Buy Local chapter out of LSP's Twin Cities office (see pages 24-25). □



Opportunity knocks

LSP's new play asks, 'Who will farm the land?'

What is one of the most critical discussions that needs to take place to ensure a sustainable food and farming system long into the future? It's the conversation that takes place between Nettie and Gerald.

Nettie and Gerald's talk is at the core of *Look Who's Knockin'*, a one-act play recently developed by the Land Stewardship Project. This spring, the two-person play was presented to roughly 750 people at venues throughout southeast Minnesota, as well as in La Crosse, Wis.

The play features the fictional elderly couple and their struggle with figuring out what to do with their farm when it is no longer possible for them to work the land. They face a dilemma: do they sell the land to the largest farm operation in the county, or give a young entrepreneurial couple an opportunity to launch their own enterprise?

The former choice, which Nettie supports, provides almost instant financial security, since the large operator can pay top dollar, cash-up-front. Such a dangling carrot is extremely attractive to someone who has worked from dawn until dusk for five decades and doesn't have a company pension to draw on upon retirement.

The latter choice is more risky. It may mean renting (at a lower price than a big operation would be willing to pay) to the couple for a time until they are in a position to buy (also at a lower price) the farm. It also means putting trust in the young couple's ability to make a living utilizing methods that Gerald and Nettie aren't familiar with, such as grass-based livestock production and direct marketing.

But the "help the young farmers out" choice also comes with a tremendous potential upside. It could help the retiring couple continue the legacy of an award-winning conservation farm, a legacy they inherited themselves 50 years ago. The decision of which way to go weighs most heavily on the cantankerous Gerald, who has experienced fainting spells lately. His concern is that his wife of many years will have to deal with



Margaret Nelson (*Nettie*) and Art Moss (*Gerald*) rehearse a scene from *Look Who's Knockin'*. (LSP photo)

things on her own sooner rather than later.

A version of this conversation—at turns funny, angry and heartbreaking—is taking place all across farm country, says Doug Nopar, an LSP organizer who wrote the play.

"We have an entire generation of farmers who launched their careers on the land during the past half-century, and are faced with deciding what to do with a business that has also become a way of life for them," says Nopar.

This play is not only aimed at those folks who are having that conversation, but perhaps even more importantly, those who are not. It's not a fun topic to bring up, but it's a necessary one if our rural communities are to have a future. Sometimes a good ice-breaker can be seeing someone else, even if it's two actors, having the same conversation you need to be having, says Nopar.

"How these conversations—current as well as future ones—conclude will play a key role in whether diverse, sustainable

farming gets a permanent foothold in Minnesota and across the country," says Karen Stettler, former Director of LSP's Farm Beginnings Program.

Nopar says the play is based on dozens of conversations LSP staff have had with farmers and other community members in recent years. "All good dramatic performances are a reflection of the reality in our daily lives, and *Knockin'* is no exception," says Nopar.

The play was directed by LSP member Eva Barr, who is active in the local theater community and who farms near Wykoff, Minn. She brought her own experiences as a young southeast Minnesota farmer to the production.

"I'm in the camp that the more farmers we have in the countryside, the healthier the land's going to be in the long run as long as people are approaching it responsibly," she said recently while taking a break from a rehearsal of the play. "Any piece that raises issues about farming can be potent."

One reality LSP has run up against is that many of the new entrepreneurs that pass through its Farm Beginnings course (*pages 16-22*) find themselves stymied by a lack of access to land, says Stettler, who is now leading LSP's Community Engagement and Impact Initiative, which is working to help beginning farmers get access to land.

"At the end of this year we will have 500 graduates," says Stettler. "Many of those graduates are farming, but some are not, because of lack of access to land."

Talking about it

Nopar and Stettler say the main goal of *Knockin'* is to spawn a community discussion about farm transition issues, similar to what the LSP play *Planting in the Dust* did for the conversation around soil stewardship during the 1980s.

For example, prior to a recent performance of the play in a church hall in Lewiston, Minn., Nopar and Stettler addressed the audience of around 40 people—a mix of younger farmers and wannabe farmers, middle-aged established farmers and elderly agrarians, as well as residents from town.

"What would you want the farming community to look like 10 years from now?" Nopar asked at one point. "Because if you don't take control of it, someone else will."

The consensus seemed to be that they wanted more farms, not fewer, and wanted operators that would take care of the land and shop locally.

Knockin', see page 9...

"Without these small farms, these small towns will dry up," said one 20-something man.

The discussion then turned to the role government agriculture programs play in punishing smaller, diverse farms in favor of large-scale operations that raise thousands of acres of one or two commodity crops.

"Programs have pushed farmers to take out conservation measures," said a local trout fisherman, "even if you have a conservation soul."

Money, health care costs and the need to take part-time employment just to keep an operation viable were some of the other issues brought up.

"How many acres does it take to make it on a farm these days anyway?" asked one man in the audience.

"That's a loaded question," Stettler answered.



Audience members talked about some of the barriers to passing farming operations on to the next generation during a post-play discussion in the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston. (LSP photo)

Chatting about challenges

It also turns out to be a question Nettie asks herself during the play when contemplating the young couples' ideas for utilizing innovative production and marketing on their farm.

"I don't know—will his thing really cash flow?" Nettie asks in a moment of self-doubt. "Can you make it in farming these days?"

After the play, Nopar and Stettler opened the floor to more audience discussion. It ranged from the barrier offered by lack of affordable health care, to the importance of having a good attorney when doing a farm transition—whether it be to a family member or someone else.

Older and middle-aged farmers described various scenarios under which they either passed on farms or were the recipients of farm transitions.

One farmer had a five-year partnership with his dad before finally taking over the dairy operation. "Then when we bought another farm, an older woman sold it to us on contract for deed—she didn't ask for a down payment," says the farmer.

An older woman said that when she and her husband sold their farm to a son, "We didn't sell it for top dollar and people asked why." They got a good lawyer who was familiar with farm transfers and discussed the situation with their other children.

One younger woman said when she came to the area from out-of-state in hopes of farming, "We didn't even know how to approach a farmer." She said a valuable tool would be a way for beginning farmers and older farmers to network, and learn about each other.

An elderly woman related the story of how her family's farm, which was considered a top-notch operation, went under financially after decades of operation. The story made it clear that even established farms are often struggling with how to stay

viable on a day-to-day basis, leaving little room to worry about helping the next generation out.

At one point during the discussion, the Nelson family—Arlene and Laverne, along with their son Ross and his wife Tiffany—related how they are passing their dairy farm on within the family. Arlene made it clear that she and Laverne would not have the confidence to pass the farm on to Ross and Tiffany if it weren't for the premium they receive from their certified organic dairy herd.

Unfortunately, such confidence in how farming can provide viable opportunities for beginners is lacking in many rural areas. Many farmers who got started after World War II feel they were the last of a breed—entrepreneurial farmers who could make a go of it on the land with the help of some sweat equity, innovative management and profitable markets.

Give it a listen

To listen to *Ear to the Ground* podcasts featuring a performance of *Look Who's Knockin'* and interviews with author Doug Nopar and director Eva Barr, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html (episodes 93 and 94).

Highlighting opportunities

Nopar says it's not surprising that older farmers see few opportunities for a younger generation to follow in their footsteps, given the number of farms that have gone under in recent years, taking Main Street economies with them. But through Farm Beginnings and the community based food movement, for example, opportunities are emerging in agriculture for new entrepreneurs, he says.

"We also have an entire generation of farmers who were pioneers in sustainable agriculture, and who now have knowledge and experience to pass on to the next generation," says Nopar.

That's why *Look Who's Knockin'* addresses the "there are no opportunities in agriculture" issue as well. Gerald, worn down by his poor health and worried about his family's financial security, is mostly unimpressed by the two young farmers who have shown an interest in taking over their farm. He's also worried about peer pressure—what will happen when the other retired farmers at the coffee shop find out he got less than top dollar for his farm?

Nettie sees a little of her and Gerald in the young couple, and is excited about how their new production and marketing ideas could provide the basis for continuing their farm's legacy.

"Now we have a chance to help someone else—young people that were just like we were in so many ways," she says. "Wouldn't that be something to be truly proud of?"

The conversation continues.... □

More performances of *Look Who's Knockin'*

The Land Stewardship Project is planning on presenting *Look Who's Knockin'* at venues throughout the region in coming months. Watch future issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter* and the *LIVE-WIRE*, our electronic newsletter, for details.

If you're interested in presenting the play to your community, contact Doug Nopar at 507-523-3366 or dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org for information on determining the cost involved in bringing actors to your area.



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LSP News

Reaching out in hog country

Isolation from other farmers can be a major barrier to spreading the word about innovative systems

Independent hog farmers could be forgiven for beginning to feel like inhabitants of desert islands, with oceans of corporate-controlled CAFOs (as well as corn and soybean fields) separating them from their peers. That became clear at a Land Stewardship Project workshop on raising pork for niche markets held in Redwood Falls, Minn., earlier this winter.

"I think we're one of two farms in Sibley County that farrows," estimated one of the approximately 30 hog farmers who attended the workshop.

Such isolation can be a major detriment to making innovative livestock production a bigger part of rural communities. Throughout the history of U.S. agriculture, true innovation has been rooted in farmer-to-farmer exchange of information, augmented by expertise from Extension educators, scientists and input suppliers.

Studies show that a major barrier to adopting sustainable farming methods is lack of information and firsthand knowledge related to those systems.

"Most of these sustainable ag systems that offer opportunities for people may take less money to get into, but you have to make up for that with more management," says Richard Ness, an LSP organizer who works with the Farm Beginnings program (see pages 16-22). "And being able to pick the brains of experienced farmers and other experts is just critical."

Such opportunities to network are becoming more difficult for hog farmers. Hogs were once such reliable sources of regular

income on small- and medium-sized farms that they were called "mortgage lifters." They were a great way to walk corn off the farm profitably. But for the past two decades the production of hogs on diversified crop and livestock operations has been replaced by a system of specialized, large-scale facilities. This has resulted in more hogs concen-



During a recent LSP field day, U of M animal scientist Yuzhi Li talked to farmers about research being done at the research station in Morris on deep-straw pork production. (LSP photo)

trated on fewer farms.

According to the latest Census of Agriculture, between 2002 and 2007, the number of hog operations nationally with 500 to 999 hogs dropped 47 percent to 2,382. Meanwhile, operations with 5,000 or more hogs grew from 957 in 2002 to 1,128 in 2007.

Such trends mean more liquid manure is being concentrated in such a way that it poses a significant risk to the environment. It also concentrates wealth, decimating Main Streets in rural communities. And these trends are self-perpetuating. For example, as the hog industry becomes more dominated

Give it a listen

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Dave Stender and Richard Ness discussing niche pork production and ways farmers can share information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html (episode 96).

by mega-operations, it becomes increasingly difficult for small- and medium-sized independent hog farmers to share information about innovative production techniques.

Large-scale confined livestock operations can be vectors for disease, and bio-security concerns have made hog raising areas virtual fortresses of porcine solitude. That means field days, tours and informal visits involving farmers of all types are almost unheard of in many parts of hog country. As farmers and animal scientists made clear at the Redwood Falls workshop, traditional information channels such as feed dealers and veterinarians are even drying up as their customers go by the wayside.

Sharing information

"It's critical—people need a chance to get together, share information and swap stories," says Ness, who has several years of experience helping farmers adopt sustainable livestock techniques such as managed rotational grazing for cattle and deep straw production for pigs.

It was this kind of networking that helped many swine farmers react to the industrialization of hogs by raising pork for niche markets. Around 15 years ago there emerged a serious consumer market for

hogs that were raised without antibiotics in humane conditions. It doesn't hurt that hogs raised on deep straw and pasture have also been winning taste tests among consumers.

In recent years, farmers have been selling that sustainably-raised pork direct to consumers, as well as through such firms as Niman Ranch and via certified organic markets. It's difficult to determine how much "niche" or "sustainable" pork is out there, but here's an interesting side note to the Census of Agriculture's hog statistics:

Hogs, see page 11...

in 2002 there were 38,210 farms with hog herd sizes of 24 animals or less. By 2007, the number of farms in that size range had grown by 15 percent. It's a safe bet that the majority of those smaller herds are being raised in alternative systems.

But farmers who have made the decision to transition into sustainable pork production methods can't go it alone. Raising hogs without antibiotics (see page 5) or intensive climate-controlled housing is a major challenge, one that is a constantly moving target. Simply turning hogs out into an open field or utilizing an old dairy barn for farrowing won't work anymore. When farmers switch from technology-intensive to management-intensive farming, they must adapt, and successful adaptation means keeping the flow of information going within the community, says Ness, who adds that it's also critical to bring farmers in contact with scientists who can bring in a wider perspective.

Making niche pork efficient

During the Redwood Falls workshop, Iowa State animal scientist Dave Stender talked about how raising niche pork has been confronted by a new challenge: skyrocketing prices for feed, caused by record high prices for corn and soybeans. Hogs not raised in climate-controlled confinement tend to use more feed to get to market weight. Higher feed prices means niche producers need to pay close attention to conversion ratios, feeding trough equipment adjustments and alternative feedstocks in



Niche pork systems like deep straw production can reduce stress on animals and provide access to lucrative markets, but require significant management adjustments. (LSP photo)

ways they didn't have to when corn was \$2 a bushel. Yuzhi Li, an animal scientist at the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center, talked about how pig death rates in niche operations are well above where they should be, and even above similar niche operations in Europe.

"We've got to shift our time more to things that pay," said Stender. "We spend time pitching manure, and we need to spend more time managing reproduction, for example."

Stender cited data from a multi-state analysis that showed a significant profitability gap between the top 15 niche hog producers and the bottom 15 producers studied. Even though both groups received generally the same prices for their finished products, the top farmers garnered an average return of \$17.43 per hundred pounds of pork after investment of capital and management, among other things, were taken into account. The

bottom 15 producers got an average return of only \$2.17.

It's clear those bottom producers have a lot to learn from the ones at the top of the heap, said Stender.

Workshops like this one are good places to re-ignite the kind of networking that used to be so easy back in the days when hog farmers ran into each other on a daily basis, says Ness. As an example, one young woman who wants to start a hog operation from scratch asked the other workshop participants for some advice. The meeting soon turned into an impromptu brainstorming session on everything from how to research one's market to determining overhead costs and labor needs.

"Create situations like this and all kinds of knowledge flows," said Ness afterwards. "Give people a chance, they gain from it. Consistently you see that—they gain." □

Update

We the People...

Policy

Legislative Update:

Environmental review weakened, sustainable ag unfunded, local control threatened

EDITOR'S NOTE: As this issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* went to press, the 2011 session of the Minnesota Legislature was a few weeks from its May 23 adjournment, and several of the Land Stewardship Project's legislative priorities were still up in the air. We will have a complete rundown of the legislative session in a future *LSL*, as well as on our website. In the meantime, here's a preliminary assessment of the 2011 legislative session.

By Bobby King & Paul Sobocinski

Environmental review

Land Stewardship Project members have had a long history of engaging in the environmental review process to make sure large scale developments in their communities like factory farms and ethanol facilities don't come at the expense of the local

environment and quality of life. While not perfect, environmental review is one way that neighbors of a proposed facility can weigh in with their concerns.

Corporate interests, working with the Chamber of Commerce, made weakening environmental review a top priority during this session of the Minnesota Legislature. Using the downturn in the economy as an excuse, corporate interests pushed legisla-

tion to roll back important, long-standing environmental protections in our state.

The first bills introduced in the 2011 Legislature — House File 1 and Senate File 1 — weakened environmental review by, among other things, allowing a project proposer to prepare the Environmental Impact Statement and denying citizens the right to appeal environmental review decisions in their local District Courts. Touted as "jobs bills," proponents offered no facts to support that these bills will indeed create a single job.

Despite this, and despite the fact that Governor Mark Dayton had already implemented some aspects of the Legislature's environmental review proposals through an Executive Order, the bills were passed and signed by the Governor early in the session. At this writing, there were a number of other bad bills and amendments moving at the Legislature that further propose to weaken

Legislature, see page 12...

...Legislature, from page 11

environmental review.

Environmental review allows for public comment and participation. In many cases, it is the only opportunity for neighbors — those most directly impacted by a proposed development — to have their voices heard in the process. Environmental review is the best way to prevent pollution by ensuring projects are built right in the first place.

Only the largest developments with the potential for significant environmental impacts require environmental review. These projects, which include developments such as hazardous waste facilities, stream diversions, paper and pulp processing mills, highway projects, marinas and industrial-scale feedlots, among others, have a longer processing time due to environmental review. This change in the law makes even the most basic environmental review more difficult and expensive, and further tips the process in favor of corporate interests. In other words, it makes it even more difficult for people to have a say in decisions that affect their lives for decades to come.

Community rights

The power of townships and other local units of government to control where developments such as large-scale livestock operations are located has been a consistent target of pro-factory farm forces and their allies within the Legislature. LSP has long been a leader in the state in standing up for local democracy. During past Legislative sessions we have repeatedly beat back attempts to undermine this basic right.

During the 2011 session, House File 389 and Senate File 270 proposed to make it more difficult for townships to enact an interim ordinance, a key tool for communities who want to protect themselves from unanticipated, harmful development.

Under the proposal, merely applying for a permit would exempt a proposed development from any future interim ordinance. But all too often neighbors do not get information about a project until *after* the permit has been applied for. In such cases, an interim ordinance may be needed to freeze the status quo and create time to assess the situation.

The bills would require a two-thirds vote by (a super majority), say, a township board, to enact an interim ordinance. Currently, an interim ordinance can be enacted by a

simple majority — that's how democratic rights should work. There's no reason to make adopting an interim ordinance so hard.

The bills also slow the process for enacting an interim ordinance by mandating public notice before an interim ordinance can be enacted. In many cases, a local unit of government — particularly a township — does not get complete information on a proposed development until shortly before approval. In those cases, there can be legitimate concerns that the local government needs to address. When that happens, an interim ordinance must be enacted quickly to be effective. The very nature of an interim ordinance is to address unanticipated situations, so there are times when it must be



LSP organizer Paul Sobocinski talked about the importance of local control during an LSP-COACT meeting March 1 in Little Falls, Minn. (LSP photo)

enacted quickly as an emergency measure.

As these anti-local control proposals moved through the Legislature, LSP members and others called and e-mailed lawmakers expressing strong opposition to weakening the power to enact an interim ordinance.

In April, LSP member-farmer Alan Perish, testified before the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee. Perish, who is also a township officer in southwest Minnesota, told the committee that local control is important so that smaller townships have the time to research and collect the local input necessary to make informed decisions.

“Often before a township or the county government is aware of something going on, the proposers of the project have already done all the homework, and they know what they want, and they’ve kind of caught the local officials on the blind side of things,

especially the townships, because they don’t have full-time employees,” he said.

As a result of pressure from LSP and other groups, three initial authors of the legislation removed their names from the anti-local control bills. However, these bills were still alive as of this writing. On a positive note, Gov. Mark Dayton had promised to veto any proposal that weakens local control.

Funding for sustainable ag

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program is one of the most respected initiatives of its kind in the country. This program provides grants to sustainable farmers to conduct on-farm demonstration projects and research. The results are then published annually in the popular *Greenbook*. This program creates innovative farmer-driven solutions and facilitates farmer-to-farmer education.

LSP helped establish this program and has fought successfully over the years to see that it receives funding. With a successful 20-year history, the Sustainable Ag Grants Program and *Greenbook* are especially needed now to meet the needs of the growing number of sustainable farmers.

But the program has taken more than its share of cuts in the past. During the last two-year budget cycle in 2009, when the entire Ag Budget was cut by about 8 percent, this program’s annual funding was reduced from \$160,000 to \$100,000 by the Legislature. When then-Governor Tim Pawlenty vetoed the second year of funding for the program, the overall cut ended up being 50 percent. That same year Minnesota’s organic certification cost share program

was cut from \$100,000 a year to \$10,000, making for an overall cut of more than 90 percent to these two programs.

LSP member Carmen Fernholz, a southwest Minnesota farmer who over the years has utilized the demonstration grants program to conduct cutting edge research on his operation, testified before a legislative conference committee on April 11.

“It has served as an incubator for truly creative, sustainable innovations in agriculture,” he testified. “The innovations that have come out of this program have helped a broad cross-section of farmers—sustainable and conventional alike.”

In past years the program had received a specific allocation from the Legislature. However, this year the Ag Finance Bill

Legislature, see page 13...

passed with language that only *allows* Commissioner of Agriculture Dave Frederickson to spend up to \$100,000 annually on the sustainable agriculture program— no actual funding was mandated.

At press time, funding for the Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grants Program was in the hands of Frederickson. On April 16, LSP's State Policy Committee wrote a letter to Frederickson asking him to use his discretionary authority as authorized by the Ag Finance Bill to allocate \$100,000 a year for the Sustainable Ag Program. The letter also expressed the State Policy Committee's commitment to work with Frederickson during the next budget cycle to strengthen organic and sustainable ag's funding.

LSP State Policy Committee Members who wrote this important letter to Commissioner Frederickson and who guide LSP's state policy work in general are: Dave and Florence Minar, New Prague; Alan Perish, Murdock; Sister Kathleen Mary Kiemen, St. Paul; Barb Nelson, Lewiston; Ted Winter, Fulda; and Dennis Johnson, Morris.

During an interview with the *Land Stewardship Letter* (see page 14), Frederickson acknowledged getting the letter and pledged support for sustainable and organic agriculture. □

Bobby King and Paul Sobocinski are LSP Policy Program organizers. King can be reached at 612-722-6377; Sobocinski at 507-342-2323. You can follow the latest Legislative developments—as well as other LSP news—via LIVE-WIRE, our monthly electronic newsletter. See page 31 for details on signing up.

'It's the democracy that's closest to you' LSP-COACT meeting highlights need for policy changes

Local control, livestock competition, health care, federal farm policy and support for beginning farmers were on the agenda during a Land Stewardship Project meeting March 1 in Little Falls, Minn. A similar meeting was held in New Ulm, Minn., later that month.

The meetings brought together farmers, townships officials and other rural residents to discuss ways they could have a greater voice in developing and supporting state and federal policy that is good for family farmers, consumers and rural communities.

LSP organizer Paul Sobocinski talked at the Little Falls meeting, which was co-sponsored by Citizens Organizing and Acting Together (COACT), about the importance of protecting local control (see page 12).

"It's the democracy that's closest to you," said Sobocinski, who raises crops and livestock in southwest Minnesota. "When you talk to your local township board, that's your neighbor. When you go further up the line, you have less control."

Guest speaker Dave Frederickson, the newly-appointed Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture, agreed with Sobocinski.

"Whenever possible, decisions should be made by the people who have to live with their results," said Frederickson, who went on to promise that Gov. Mark Dayton would veto any legislation that weakened local control.

Don Pylkanen, an organizer with COACT, said a major barrier to developing sustainable rural communities is a system that makes even basic health care unafford-

able for farmers and other rural residents.

"It's the 800 pound gorilla in the room," he said. "We have a coalition that's trying to tackle that gorilla."

LSP organizer Adam Warthesen discussed the importance of having a strong, enforceable Packers and Stockyards Act (see page 15) in order to bring competition back to the livestock industry for family farmers.

"What we're seeing is packers' ability to own livestock or control livestock has gotten bigger," said Warthesen.

During the meeting, participants made a list of policy changes they'd like to see. Ideas included a beginning farmer tax break, meaningful payment limitations for USDA commodity programs, more control of pesticide drift, more local foods in school cafeterias, a more supportive environment for agritourism, better antitrust enforcement, simplification of the regulatory system for local food processors, and limiting the ability of corporations to influence policy.

On that last point, Sobocinski said in order to bring about positive changes, whether it's in health care reform or making the livestock industry more competitive, rural residents are going to have to take on corporations by "getting in their face."

"Never before have corporations had so much power in this country," said Sobocinski. "I don't care if you're a farmer or have a small business—we all are affected by corporations that make us run faster just to keep up."

OAP: Economic development & racial equity linked

As the Minnesota Legislature convened in January, lawmakers promised to focus on improving the economic situation in the state. All too often, "economic development" is used as an excuse to ignore social goods like environmental quality for the sake of job creation. However, the Land Stewardship Project has long argued that sustainable job creation and environmental quality should go hand-in-hand, and are not mutually exclusive.

Another key social good—racial equity—is also linked directly to the state's long-term economic vitality. Communities of color, women and low-income people are hit the hardest among the jobless. But new arrivals also have great potential: Minnesota immigrants start small businesses at a rate three times higher than that of the native-born

population, according to Wilder Research. Many of those would-be entrepreneurs come from farming backgrounds, and could offer a significant economic boost to Minnesota's food and farming economy.

With that in mind, earlier this year the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP), a long time LSP ally, issued a special policy brief outlining 14 ways to expand job and economic opportunity in the state while reducing racial inequity. LSP Policy Program Director Mark Schultz and Policy organizer Bobby King assisted in developing the policy brief. Schultz also set up and participated in a meeting with Rep. Paul Thissen, the House Minority Leader, at which OAP's recommendations were discussed.

The policy brief describes solutions such as strengthening entrepreneurship and busi-

ness development among people of color and women. It also calls for assisting beginning farmers with access to land through the creation of tax incentives for established farmers or landowners who rent or sell land to beginners.

"Racial and gender disparities in employment and wealth in Minnesota are stark and sobering," says Jermaine Toney, Lead Policy Analyst for OAP. "Closing these gaps is one of the important ways communities and policy makers can invest in the long term economic health of our state." □

To view "14 Solutions that Expand Job and Economic Opportunity, and Reduce Minnesota's Disparities," see www.oaproject.org/news/#news-18.

A Q & A with the ag commissioner

New MDA head Dave Frederickson vows support for sustainable and organic farming, but where's the money?

EDITOR'S NOTE: In January, Dave Frederickson started his new job as the Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture, taking over from Gene Hugoson, who had occupied that position since 1995. Frederickson, along with his wife Kay, operated a farm near Murdock, Minn., for more than 20 years. He also served in the Minnesota Senate and as the president of the Minnesota Farmers Union as well as the National Farmers Union. From 2007 to 2010, Frederickson worked as agricultural outreach director for Minnesota U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar. In early May, Frederickson talked with the *Land Stewardship Letter* about his priorities for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), and his desire to find funding for programs that serve farmers interested in sustainable and organic agriculture.

LSL: As Commissioner of Agriculture, what priority do you see putting toward sustainable and organic agriculture in Minnesota?

Frederickson: Absolutely the sustainable agriculture community and organic agriculture community are high priorities for me. Training programs for young farmers and new immigrants are high priorities as well, and I would like to use my position as a bully pulpit to support this kind of thing. I think it's high time that we spend more time on sustainability here in the state. Our approach here has to be to prioritize small and medium sized farms, specialty crops, sustainable and organic agriculture. Unfortunately, we ran into a brick wall at the Legislature this year in terms of funding for sustainable and organic agriculture.

LSL: Speaking of which, sustainable and organic agriculture programs at the MDA have not made out so well lately (see pages 12-13) at the Legislature. In the budget passed by the Legislature in 2009, the organic certification cost share initiative and Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Program received basically a 90 percent budget cut. The organic cost share program was cut from \$100,000 to \$10,000 and the demo program from \$160,000 to \$100,000. The second year of funding for the ag demo program was vetoed by then Gov. Tim

Pawlenty.

In the current budget, the organic cost-share program still remains at the \$10,000 funding level, and the Legislature provided no funding at all for the ag demo program.

Frederickson: That 2009 budget was



Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture Dave Frederickson (right) talked to LSP members after a meeting in Little Falls, Minn., on March 1. See page 13 for details on the meeting. (LSP photo)

before my time here. As far as the budget that was passed this session, I was committed to fully funding sustainable and organic agriculture, but unfortunately the Legislature didn't see it that way. We thought we had the funding but the final bill's language says we may fund the demo program, instead of will fund it. That's nice language, but may spend is the authorizing language we're left with. I'm amazed [funding] wasn't included and surprised it wasn't included in the budget.

LSL: Let's talk about that language. Somewhere along the line, the bill funding the sustainable ag demonstration program was changed from will fund to may fund. How did that happen?

Frederickson: I can't answer that for sure. Somewhere along the line the left hand and the right hand missed each other. Apparently, we all missed on this one. Now, the lesson is not to lay blame, but figure out how to prioritize such programs.

LSL: Since the Legislature didn't mandate funding, that means if the sustainable ag demo program is to continue, you as the Commissioner will need to find money within the MDA to fund it.

Frederickson: I'm committed to do the best I can to come up with \$100,000 or something close to that for the ag demo program sometime this year. I have a letter (see page 13) LSP's State Policy Committee calling for fully funding sustainable and organic agriculture programs. For the record, I agree with LSP's Policy Committee on this. Do I have \$100,000 lying around? No I don't. [The MDA] has a substantial budget but it's primarily committed [to other programs].

LSL: Any ideas where you can find the funding?

Frederickson: Not right now other than making staff cuts, which I don't want to do.

LSL: Some of LSP's members have expressed concern that MDA programs that serve sustainable and organic agriculture have been disproportionately cut when compared to programs that serve other types of agriculture. How do you respond to those concerns?

Frederickson: I understand there is this feeling that it is disproportionate. It's tough—it adds fuel to the fire that many of your members feel they've been slighted, and I understand it. What I have to do is come up with that \$100,000. I'm going to try my best to find that funding, that's all I can say.

LSL: In the big picture, what are some farming trends here in Minnesota that concern you?

Frederickson: I'm concerned that land prices have gone to the point where a young farmer is going to have a real hard time stepping in. I just read about \$7,800 an acre land. How does a young couple make it on land that high priced? In the 80s the bubble popped, and down it came. There was a lot of pain. □

Does the President have the courage to enact market livestock reforms?

By Adam Warthesen

Over six months ago in November, USDA closed the comment period for the proposed rule aimed at bringing greater fairness to livestock and poultry markets. The rulemaking was a result of Congress and family farm groups advancing a directive in the 2008 Farm Bill to clarify and strengthen the Packers and Stockyards Act, a law on the books that has never adequately

been enforced. So what gives, why hasn't Obama's USDA enacted the final rule? While not the total reform we need, it is the first step in beginning to counteract the imbalance of power that exists in the livestock industry between farmers and giant packers.

It's been six months since close of the comment period. We've had 60,000 comments (mostly in support of the draft rule) submitted, five USDA/Department of Justice field hearings on agriculture competition, and constant public demand for change. What is causing the delay?

gaming the system for years. Changes to their mode of operation, with basic fairness guidelines, threaten their profit margins."

As the industry made erroneous claims and accusations at the hearing, no family farmers or USDA experts were present to provide a rebuttal or give an alternative perspective.

"This should have been listed as a dog and pony show, instead of as a Congressional hearing," says Henning. "You had a one-sided industry dominated view on the new rule. In farm country, the majority of cattle producers are for the enforcement of the livestock market fairness reforms."

We can expect more attacks, like attempts to strip GIPSA funding as well as aggressive

What the final GIPSA rule needs to do

Along with hundreds of farmers and other stakeholders, the Land Stewardship Project last fall submitted comments to the USDA on the proposal to strengthen the Packers and Stockyards Act. Basically, LSP wants to see a rule that:

→ Allows family farmers and ranchers to find out what prices and terms of sale are being offered for livestock. This currently does not exist for most independent family farm livestock producers and it must be addressed.

→ Increases and ensures better market access for family farm livestock producers.

→ Identifies violations of the Act and leads to improved enforcement and curtailment of the most abusive and unfair procurement practices used by corporate meatpackers.

LSP's full comments on the rule can be viewed at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/GIPSAComments.pdf.

been enforced.

The proposed rule outlines and identifies unfair, discriminatory or deceptive practices meatpackers and their partners are prohibited from using in the procurement of livestock. This action is long overdue, as consolidation and concentration in the livestock sector has accelerated during the past couple of decades.

Issued by the Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), the new rule has the potential to improve competition and prices throughout the livestock supply chain, benefiting cattle, hog, poultry and lamb producers at all levels.

The Land Stewardship Project has strongly supported USDA moving forward with the new rule. While not a cure-all for the ills of excessive corporate power and abuse in the livestock markets, the proposed rule (see sidebar) is a good step, and as many livestock farmers have expressed with more than a little frustration: "It's about time."

Over the past year we've had farmers testify at USDA field hearings, submit comments or call USDA and the White House demanding action. We organized meetings with livestock producers, conducted face-to-face meetings with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and other officials, and have been a constant and present voice for increased fairness and reforms to livestock marketing.

Giant meatpackers attack

Unfortunately, part of the reason for delay in issuing the final rule can be traced to a campaign on the part of the industry to continue business as usual. Giant packers and trade associations like the American Meat Institute, as well as packer-producer groups such as the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) and National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), have unveiled a heavy public relations and lobbying campaign opposing the rule. Such entities have made it clear they are not going to give up the power they hold over the industry without a fight.

USDA and Congress have faced the brunt of this campaign, which has consisted of anti-GIPSA forces vilifying public officials and using trade publications to announce that enforcing the rule will be the end of livestock agriculture as we know it.

Crop and cattle producer Tim Henning of Adrian, Minn., stated it well when responding to an April Congressional hearing where representatives from Cargill and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association pounced on GIPSA and lambasted the fair market livestock reforms.

"What a surprise—Cargill and the packer-producer groups don't like fair market livestock reforms," says Henning, "Of course they don't, since they've been

lobbying and lawsuits by meatpackers and their partners.

We have thousands of rank-and-file livestock producers, as well as many consumers, who are saying, "good start, move the rule forward and enforce it," while giant meatpackers and livestock commodity groups are spending big bucks to try and kill or cripple the proposed reforms.

So it comes down to this: does the Obama Administration have the fortitude to stand up to corporate livestock forces and finish what it started? The longer the process goes on, the more likely detractors are to succeed in grinding it to a halt.

The time for leadership is now. □

Adam Warthesen is an LSP federal policy organizer. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.

Opportunities



Resources

CSP sign-up information

Sign-up for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is now continuous. Check out the Land Stewardship Project's updated CSP fact sheet at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSPFactSheet1.pdf. You can also get details from LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Farm Beginnings

Farm Beginnings classes for 2011-2012 announced; deadline Aug. 1

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course is now accepting applications for its 2011-2012 class sessions, which will take place in the Minnesota communities of Rochester and Hutchinson. The application deadline is Aug. 1.

In 2011, LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 14th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course is tailor-made for people of all ages just getting started in farming, as well as established farmers looking to make changes in their operations. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, enterprise planning, marketing and innovative production techniques.

Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the area. The classes, which meet approximately twice a month, run until March 2012, followed by an on-farm education component (*see*

below) that includes farm tours and skills sessions.

The fee is \$1,500 per farming partnership (flexible payment plan and partial scholarships available), and early-bird registrants are eligible to attend on-farm education events this summer and fall. Interest-free livestock loans are also available.

Over the years, more than 500 people have graduated from the Minnesota-region Farm Beginnings program. Farm Beginnings graduates are involved in a wide-range of agricultural enterprises, including grass-based livestock, organic vegetables, Community Supported Agriculture and specialty products.

Besides Minnesota and Wisconsin, Farm Beginnings classes have been held over the years in Illinois, Nebraska, North Dakota and the Duluth-Superior area. New Farm Beginnings courses have recently been launched in South Dakota and the Hudson Valley of New York.

More information on LSP's Farm Beginnings course is available at www.farmbeginnings.org, or by contacting LSP's Karen Benson at 507-523-3366 or lpse@landstewardshipproject.org. The web page also has details on Farm Beginnings courses in other states. □

Holistic classes this summer

The Land Stewardship Project will be putting on Holistic Management classes on grazing, biological monitoring and land planning in June and July, somewhere in western Minnesota (*exact location to be announced*):

- **June 10-11:** Holistic Management Planned Grazing field day class.
- **July:** Holistic Management Biological Monitoring field day class (*details to be announced*).
- **July:** Holistic Management Land Planning field day class (*details to be announced*).

Watch LSP's *LIVE-WIRE* electronic newsletter for details. More information is also available by contacting LSP's Richard Ness at rness@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-2105. □

2011 Farm Beginnings on-farm events

The 2011 on-farm educational component of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program has begun. During the next few months, LSP will be hosting two kinds of on-farm events: **field days** and **farm tours**. **Field days** cover specific topics on a farm and are targeted at Farm Beginnings graduates, but for a \$35 fee are open to members of the public (limited to 20 people) who are interested in farming. Farm Beginnings participants and LSP members can participate in field days at no charge. **Farm tours** are targeted at the general public and offer a more broad view of the host farm. LSP members and Farm Beginnings participants can attend farm tours at no charge; others will be charged \$20 to cover expenses.

→ **May 21: Introduction to grazing field day**—workshop at St. Charles (Minn.) Community Center (9 a.m.-noon); tour at Brad and Rochelle Schrandt farm, St. Charles, (1 p.m.-3:30 p.m.); Contact: Aimee Finley, 507-523-3366, aimee@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **May 22: Farm Dreams—exploring your future in farming**, Hutchinson, Minn. (1 p.m.-5 p.m.); Contact: Nick Olson, 320-269-2105; nicko@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **June 4: Introduction to grazing field day**—Don and Helen Berheim farm, Benson, Minn. (9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.); contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105, rness@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **June 25: Fertility & soil management field day**—Whitewater Gardens, Altura, Minn. (10 a.m.-3 p.m.); contact: Parker Forsell, 507-523-3366, [\[landstewardshipproject.org\]\(http://landstewardshipproject.org\).](mailto:parker@</p></div><div data-bbox=)

→ **June 26: Farm Tour of Easy Yoke Farm & Heart Beet Farm**—Millville, Minn. (1 p.m.-4 p.m.); contact: Aimee Finley, 507-523-3366, aimee@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **July 9: Summer grazing field day focusing on pasture yields**—Bill McMillin

farm, Kellogg, Minn. (1 p.m.-4 p.m.); contact Aimee Finley, 507-523-3366, aimee@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **July 30: Beginning farmer trouble shooting field day—East Henderson Farm**, Henderson, Minn. (1 p.m.-4 p.m.); Contact: Parker Forsell, 507-523-3366, parker@landstewardshipproject.org (*see pages 18-19 for more on East Henderson Farm*).

→ **September 17: Fall grazing field day focusing on winter preparation**, University of Minnesota-Morris, (1 p.m.-4 p.m.); contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105, rness@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **September 25: Fall grazing field day focusing on winter preparation**, Wolf Hill Farm, La Crescent, Minn. (1 p.m.-4 p.m.); contact Aimee Finley, 507-523-3366, aimee@landstewardshipproject.org



Extracurricular activities

LSP reaches beyond the classroom to help beginning farmers

By Parker Forsell

In the mid-1990s, Land Stewardship Project member-farmers in southeast Minnesota approached the organization about helping end the drought of new farmers entering agriculture. LSP worked with those farmers to craft the program that eventually became known as Farm Beginnings. Since it was launched 14 years ago, LSP's Farm Beginnings Program has introduced over 500 prospective farmers to goal setting, financial planning, innovative marketing and networking with experienced farmers in our region.

In the beginning, the vast majority of Farm Beginnings participants had some farming experience. But a recent survey (see sidebar) of incoming students shows 40 percent lack such experience. The lack of experience presents challenges during the classroom portion of Farm Beginnings, and again once students are done with class and try to begin to fill gaps identified during course work. Students rely on our budding farmer network of growers, as well as relationships forged during class. Other organizations like MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service) and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota help them with the difficult task of moving from farm plan to farm business.

Getting started in farming requires more than simply completing a class. Our experience shows it can require a transition period of at least five years and as much as 10 years. In the past two years, LSP has made some changes to the Farm Beginnings course and also offered new opportunities post-course to better help all graduates in the difficult first few years of start-up. With that in mind, LSP's Farm Beginnings program has developed a set of tools to aid students and graduates during that transition period:

LSP Farmer Network

A key component of Farm Beginnings is creating a Farmer Network for graduates to tap into when they need advice on launching and operating their businesses. This network consists of established farmers, as well as other agricultural professionals from the region. As part of this effort, we are in the third year of providing a farmer handbook to Farm Beginnings students, graduates and Farmer Network members. Over 100 established farms are listed in the handbook. Farms list contact information, intern or employment opportunities, work exchange

days, and possibilities for visiting their operations. These opportunities are available to all Farm Beginnings students, graduates and experienced farmers listed in the handbook.

Skills assessments

As part of the class, students evaluate their current skill levels based on a variety of criteria determined by experienced farmers. The process helps students focus on short-term needs, while exposing them to the wide variety of skills needed to make a farm run successfully. These skills assessments can be downloaded at www.farmbeginnings.org, and are to be combined with a Growing Season Learning Plan (see below).

Growing Season Learning Plan

The host of skills outlined in the Skills Assessment can overwhelm beginning farmers. That's why we developed the Growing Season Learning Plan, which is meant to help beginning farmers narrow things down to a few sets of skills to work on in a given growing season. The Growing Season Learning Plan (GSLP) is an attempt to make the path toward getting a successful farm started more manageable. The GSLP is also a tool that helps shape choices for educational activities, both on-farm and in workshop settings. The template for the GSLP can be downloaded at www.farmbeginnings.org.

Winter workshops

Over the past three winters, LSP has offered half-day and full-day workshops at various locations on topics that have been determined by student and graduate feedback. All LSP members are able to attend these workshops for a fee, but they are designed to help people in the critical stages of farm start-up.

Farm field day skill sessions

Each spring, summer and fall, LSP offers on-farm field day skill sessions that address a specific skill area of the skills assessment. The field day skills sessions are aimed at those with a serious interest in farming and are open to all LSP members for free, and to the public for a fee. See page 16 for this season's list of on-farm events and workshops.

Farm Planning Track

Students and graduates are focused on their farm plans, but many also need to plan their educational and mentoring opportunities. The Farm Planning Track is meant to provide a kind of road map to mimic during

the first three years of farm start-up. The Farm Planning Track can be downloaded at www.farmbeginnings.org.

Moving forward

We are excited to have a steering committee of beginning farmers that are helping us assess these tools and offer advice toward new strategies to aid our beginning farmers in their farm start-ups. The committee met twice this winter and will continue to meet in-person and by telephone. LSP continues to work with our farmer-members to help us design and guide the strategies that we adopt for training farmers.

We are also benefiting from our work with the newly created Farm Beginnings Collaborative, which represents 11 organizations and nine Farm Beginnings programs in six states. One area of the Collaborative's work is focused on strategies to aid our Farm Beginnings students in the years of start-up following the class. We are surveying graduates of Farm Beginnings as a group and sharing practices that we are all working on in our individual locations.

If you are an experienced farmer who would like to help beginning farmers, or if you would like to offer advice for our staff and steering committee regarding our strategies to help beginning farmers with farm start-up, please contact me. □

Parker Forsell is a Farm Beginnings organizer based in LSP's southeast Minnesota office in Lewiston. He can be contacted at parker@landstewardshipproject.org or 507-523-3366.

A graduate snapshot

In February 2011, LSP conducted a survey of the 500 graduates of its Farm Beginnings Program. Eighty-five responded. Here are a few of the highlights:

- ◆ 67% are managing their own farms.
- ◆ 79% are managing more than five acres.
- ◆ 29% raise vegetables.
- ◆ 15% raise beef.
- ◆ 11% produce milk.
- ◆ 11% raise row crops.
- ◆ 5% raise sheep.
- ◆ 5% raise hogs.
- ◆ 3% raise fruit.
- ◆ 97% follow sustainable practices.
- ◆ 82% have increased their use of sustainable practices since taking Farm Beginnings.
- ◆ 60% market a majority of their product locally.
- ◆ 65% plan to expand their operations in 2011.

Farm Beginnings

Josh & Sally Reinitz

In the land of green giants

When you grow up on a farm in the shadow of the Jolly Green Giant, you can't help but think that size matters when it comes to success in agriculture. Josh Reinitz's family's land sits between Minneapolis and Mankato, just a few miles from where a wooden likeness of the Green One and his apprentice Sprout emerges from the trees, welcoming startled visitors to "The Valley"—the place where for over a century farmers have raised canning crops in rich Minnesota River bottom soil for the Green Giant vegetable label.

In recent decades, the fertile farmland here along U.S. Highway 169 has come to be dominated by large grain farms and hog facilities. So when Reinitz decided to become a farmer, he could be excused for thinking the 40 acres of family farmland remaining in the area wasn't going to be big enough to be economically viable.

"This area of the state is pretty much dominated by big corn and pork—40 acres, what am I going to do with that?" Josh, 32, asks while sitting next to his wife Sally, 31, in their home. Their two boys, Henry, 5, and Miles, 2, are tracking March mud through

the house as an early spring sun begins the spring thaw outside. "Even a few years ago I still wasn't sure I could make a living farming, because to me it had to be 2,000 acres or a feedlot."

Sally grew up in South Minneapolis, and admits to a romanticized view of farming, mostly from time spent as a girl playing on



Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

relatives' farms in the Mankato area.

But Josh had no such illusions: his family got out of farming when he was 10, mostly because his father Paul felt his only choice to stay in business was to expand and that path wasn't for him. Josh needed convincing the land that has been in his family for four generations near the community of Henderson could still generate a viable income for his family.



Sally and Josh Reinitz, along with their sons Henry and Miles: "Even a few years ago I still wasn't sure I could make a living farming, because to me it had to be 2,000 acres or a feedlot," says Josh. (LSP photo)

Give it a listen

To listen to an LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Josh and Sally Reinitz, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html (episode 97).

Gearing up

But both Sally and Josh like working outside on the land: he has a degree in ecology and she in landscape horticulture. And through connections at LSP and in the community, they became exposed to farms that were making it on just a couple of acres via specialty enterprises such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which consists of selling "shares" in a farm before the growing season begins.

"The gears were beginning to turn," he recalls.

Those gears got a bit of grease when Josh's family sold them part of the original operation. In 2006, the couple took an 1860s-era log cabin that had been serving as a hunting shack, and, like some sort of modern homesteaders, transported it log-by-log to their new farm, erecting the cabin on a former hayfield. But Josh knew enough about farming to realize that having land and a place to live wasn't enough to make a go of it in the long term.

"We were ready to start something, but didn't know what," recalls Josh. "I couldn't take the normal route of being trained into farming."

So in 2008-2009 they took the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings class (see page 16). That fall and winter the couple drove twice a month to the community of Goodhue for sessions taught by established farmers and other agriculture professionals from the community. For 14 years, the Farm Beginnings program has been training beginning farmers who are interested in innovative management systems. The course emphasizes goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative production techniques. The classes are taught by established farmers and other ag professionals representing a range of enterprises: from grass-based livestock production and organic cropping to vegetables and specialty products. Farm Beginnings participants also have the opportunity to attend on-farm events where they see firsthand the use of innovative management techniques.

The first thing Josh and Sally learned was the class wasn't about how to drive a tractor. "We thought that Farm Beginnings was

Fresh Faces, see page 19...

going to be more of a how-to-farm class and we got half way through it and realized it was more of how to run a business,” recalls Sally.

“I can learn how to operate farm machinery from my father,” says Josh. “But developing a sustainable, viable business model that provides a fulltime living is the key to what makes Farm Beginnings helpful.”

The couple also learned how to take a look at what resources they had on hand, and make the best use of them in launching and running a business.

Josh and Sally have a farm with rich soil in close proximity to two good markets: the Twin Cities and St. Peter. So they lighted on operating a CSA vegetable farm, a model that they felt would allow them to grow into fulltime careers in agriculture without a huge investment in capital up front.

What not to do

Their CSA, East Henderson Farm (www.easthendersonfarm.com), is now in its third season. Sally is only half joking when she says 2010 was the year of “what not to do” farming. They had started out with 16 members in 2009 and more than doubled to 43 last year, creating some growing pains as far as vegetable storage and packing issues.

This year they have 60 members, and feel they’ve dealt with the logistics of post-harvest veggie handling with the addition of more cooling and storage space. Their long-term plans are to have 100-120 members, a size the Reinitzes feel will provide a full-time income while being sustainable from a workload point of view (Josh has been working part-time off the farm in construction and carpentry).

Scaling up on a CSA farm can be difficult—how does one match the number of vegetable acres with the number of farm subscribers, and vice-versa? But the couple has gotten the hang of “CSA math”—which is a combination of looking at spreadsheets, talking to other CSA farmers in the area, and gauging how many extra vegetables end up in the compost.

They supplement their CSA market by selling to a local food co-op and a restaurant. They also sell eggs produced by their 100 layers, as well as beef from a couple of steers they pasture.

The Reinitzes have used Josh’s background in construction and carpentry to their advantage. Besides the log cabin house, they have reclaimed other buildings and moved

Trouble shooting field day July 30

East Henderson Farm will host a field day on “Beginning Farmer Trouble Shooting” July 30, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. See page 16 for details on this and other Farm Beginnings on-farm events.

them onto the farm. In 2010 they received a grant from the USDA’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program to build a 24x96 hoop house for extending the vegetable season. Since they used salvaged lumber and erected the hoop house themselves, the Reinitzes were able to build the structure for around \$5,000, and 90 percent of that cost was covered by the EQIP grant.

The maximum size of East Henderson Farm CSA will eventually be determined



The Reinitzes are extending their vegetable season with a hoop house (shown before the plastic was put on) funded by a USDA cost share program. (LSP photo)

by the amount of land the family has to raise vegetables on. Only five acres is tillable—the rest is in either woods or pasture. Most of their vegetable acres were certified organic in 2009, with an additional 1.5 acres in transition until 2012.

But Josh and Sally haven’t forgotten an important lesson gleaned from Farm Beginnings: consider *all* the resources available on a farm. “I’m looking to the woods,” Josh says, pointing to a mixed stand of maple, red oak, pin oak, burr oak and basswood growing on a hillside that slants down to the Minnesota River a half-a-mile away. “The future of this land is in perennials.”

Indeed, this spring they tapped 40 maple trees and there are plans to establish beehives (Josh’s great-grandfather was a beekeeper) and a fruit orchard.

They also find themselves still referring to the business training they received in Farm Beginnings. Whether applying for the EQIP grant or a Farm Services Agency loan to build a vegetable packing shed, business planning skills have played an integral part in the operation of East Henderson Farm.

“One surprise is how much of a businessman I’ve become,” says Josh. “I’m an accountant. I’m a salesman. I’m a negotiator. I probably put 200 to 300 hours a year on Excel spreadsheets.”

Part of the community

But it’s not all hard-nosed business. Even in the midst of planning expansions and keeping a close eye on finances, the couple is particularly focused on making the farm part of the community. “Henderson is my hometown,” says Josh. “It’s important for me to be engaged.”

They are especially proud that around 20 of their CSA members are within five miles of the farm.

Sally says there are a lot of older farmers in the area that are excellent sources of information on everything from where to buy hay to local soil conditions. Josh’s father also lives just a few hundred yards from them in the farm’s original house, and has been a font of knowledge.

“I think there’s a lot of oral history—an oral tradition that’s been lost. They have so much information to offer about farming,” Sally says.

Perhaps the surest sign that East Henderson is being recognized as part of the farming community is the fact that the request for information is now flowing both ways.

“When you first get started and say you’re going to have an organic vegetable CSA, people say, ‘What’s that?’” Josh says as he heads to the woods to collect sap and Sally prepares to load eggs into the car for a town delivery. “Now three years into it corn and soybean farmers are asking us about crop rotations. We’ve kind of proven ourselves to the skeptics here that this is a viable farm. It might only be 40 acres, but if we’re making a living, isn’t that a farm?” □

More FB profiles

To read more Farm Beginnings profiles, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html.

Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland? Or are you an established farmer/landowner who is seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent your land, or to work with in a partnership/employee situation? The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program has simple application forms available for people seeking farmland or farmers. Once the form is filled out, the information can be circulated by LSP via the *Land Stewardship Letter*, the *LIVE-WIRE* and online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/land_clearinghouse.html. This service is free of charge for LSP members. To obtain a form and for more information, e-mail LSP's Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org or call 507-523-3366. You can also download the forms from our *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse* section on the LSP website at www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/resources.html#land. Here are the latest *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse* listings:

Seeking Farmland: NC

John and Sherri Powell are seeking to purchase 10-15 acres of farmland in North Carolina's Chatham or southern Alamance counties. They would prefer that at least eight acres be tillable; they do not require a house. Contact: John and Sherri Powell, 919-400-9387 or the5powells@nc.rr.com.

Farmland for Sale: SW WI

Diana Winer has for sale 39 acres of land in southwest Wisconsin, about 45 minutes southeast of La Crosse, near Viroqua, Westby and La Farge. That land has 16 acres tillable and 23 acres in woods, and is on top of a ridge. The land has good soil and the woods have a creek waterfall and grottos. Contact: Tom Jerde at 608-625-2741 for a viewing.

Seeking Farm Internship

Paige De Wees is seeking a paid internship on a farm during the upcoming growing season, preferably in the Northfield, Minn., area, but other locations would also be considered. De Wees has worked on a CSA farm in Minnesota as well as on a vineyard in New Zealand. De Wees is seeking hands-on experience with vegetable production, grazing, greenhouse production, marketing and business planning. Contact: Paige De Wees, 651-214-4602 or paigedeweas@gmail.com.

Farmland Available: SE MN

Phil and Heidi Dybing have for sell 80 acres of farmland in southeast Minnesota's Fillmore County, near the communities of Canton and Lanesboro. The land has been chemical-free for 20 years and consists of two parcels. One is approximately 70 acres with 50 acres of tillable cropland, as well as pasture and woods. It is buildable for up to three more homesteads if desired. That land is available immediately for \$3,900 per acre. The other 10-acre parcel is the farm site with a 3,200 square-foot newer home and several buildings. The 10-acre parcel is available for later possession at

\$390,000. Contact: Phil or Heidi Dybing, 507-743-8511 or pydying@acegroup.cc.

Seeking land: Twin Cities Area

Greg Vossen is seeking to purchase 10 to 40 acres of land in Carver or Scott county adjacent to Minnesota's Twin Cities—preferably near the community of Jordan. He would like tillable and forested land, and would like it to have not been sprayed for at least three years. Vossen would also like water for an aquaculture enterprise; he does not require a house. Contact: Greg Vossen, 612-964-2030.

Farmland Available: SW NE

Clinton Watkins has for sale 21.87 acres of farmland in southwest Nebraska's Perkins County, near the community of Venango. Seventeen acres is tillable and the land has been conventionally farmed. The property includes a two-story, four-bedroom house; a 40x90 Quonset building; 360 square-foot workshop/garage; four grain bins; 16x30 chicken house; and 12x50 shed. There is a good well and septic system. The price is \$145,000. Contact: Clinton Watkins, mrfrogsmanta@yahoo.com.

Seeking Land: Twin Cities Area

Michelle Wiltgen and Jake Duncan are seeking to rent 10-20 acres of tillable land in either Dakota, Scott, Carver, Rice, Ramsey, Washington or Goodhue county in the Twin Cities region. They would like the land to not have been sprayed for at least three years and to have a house. Contact: Michelle Wiltgen, 507-261-4110; wilt0078@umn.edu; 544 9th St., Red Wing, MN 55066.

Seeking Land: Twin Cities Area

Shodo Spring is seeking to buy five to 100 acres of land in the Minnesota counties of Dakota, Rice or Goodhue, south of the Twin Cities. Spring is seeking land to start a permaculture operation on while restoring native forest/prairie. No house is required, but a shack or cabin would be okay, as well as greenhouse, barn and shed facilities. Contact: Shodo Spring, shodo.spring@gmail.com; 907-887-9196.

Seeking Farmland: Western WI

Daniel Zemke is seeking to rent or buy tillable farmland in the western Wisconsin counties of Barron, Polk, St. Croix or Dunn. He does not require a house. Contact: Daniel Zemke, 715-222-0352.

Farmland Available: SC MN

Bob Korman has for rent 12.85 acres of tillable land in south-central Minnesota's Nicollet County, near North Mankato. The land has not been sprayed in five years, and has no house or outbuildings. The price is \$2,570. Contact: Bob Korman, 612-481-9653; rkorman@frontiernet.net.

Seeking Farmland: SE MN

Tom Reay is seeking to rent 25 to 50 acres or more of land in southeast Minnesota's Olmsted, Fillmore or Winona counties (within 45 minutes of Rochester). He is looking for tillable and pastured land to start his own natural or grass-fed beef and lamb operation. Reay would prefer the land to have not been sprayed for five years, but is open to various land use histories. A house would be preferred but is not a necessity. He would be interested in gradually buying and taking over an existing operation. Contact: Tom Reay, 507-261-3775; tomreay@em-barqmail.com.

Land available: Twin Cities area

Loren Butterfield has for sale 72 acres of land near Elk River and Big Lake, Minn., 35 miles northwest of Minneapolis. The land consists of 25 acres tillable, as well as pasture, open areas and woods, and has a variety of soil types. No chemicals have been used on the land for at least 40 years. Butterfield has raised vegetables on it and has experience with season extension methods he is willing to share. There are no buildings or electrical utilities, but there is a shallow sand-point well. Price is negotiable. Contact: Loren Butterfield, 952-449-6431; 612-554-7397.

Clearinghouse, see page 21...

Farmland Available: SE MN

Bonnie Kreckow is seeking a buyer for five acres of farmland in southeast Minnesota's Winona County, near the community of Utica. The property has not been sprayed in five years and includes three acres of produce gardens, 4,200 square-feet of heated greenhouse space and a house. Contact: Bonnie Kreckow, 507-272-7929; herbstoya@msn.com.

Seeking Farmland: Eastern NE

Eric Scheer is seeking to rent 150 tillable acres in eastern Nebraska's Saunders County so he can get started farming with his father. He does not require a house. Contact: Eric Scheer, 402-729-7500.

Organic Farm Available: W WI

Robert and Connie Scharlau have an organic farm available in the southeastern part of western Wisconsin's Buffalo County. It consists of 130 crop acres, with a house and outbuildings, and is located near the community of Arcadia. The Scharlaus are looking to retire and want to keep the farm organic; they are willing to help a young family get started. Contact: Robert and Connie Scharlau, 1-800-657-4412.

Farm Available: W WI

Jeff Gunderson has for sale 16 acres of farmland in western Wisconsin's Pierce County, near the community of Elmwood. The farm includes four acres of grass/clover hay ground, two acres of pasture and seven acres of tillable land, as well as three acres of forest that could be tillable. The land has not been sprayed in over 10 years. There is an updated house, barn, machine shed, potting shed and hog shed. The pasture is fenced. For photos of the property, see www.flickr.com/photos/58165058@N08. The asking price is \$195,000. Contact: Jeff Gunderson, 715-639-2008 (home); 701-260-5334 (cell).

Seeking Farmland: MN or WI

Robert Tyler Melton is seeking to purchase approximately 10 acres of farmland in southeast or central Minnesota, or in southwest Wisconsin. He wants to use the land to start a hops growing operation and would like a pole barn and house. He would prefer that the land be either certified organic or to have not been sprayed for five years. Contact: Robert Tyler Melton, 411 Division St., Apt. 13, Excelsior, MN

55331; 612-237-4498; oddballprotocol@gmail.com.

Seeking Farmland: Western MN

Travis Birhanzl is seeking to rent 40 to 500 acres of tillable farmland in western Minnesota's Chippewa or Yellow Medicine counties. He prefers that the land be conventionally farmed and does not require a house. Contact: Travis Birhanzl, 320-226-3338; tbirhanzl@hotmail.com.

Farmland for Rent: SE MN

Jennifer Beyst has for rent 2.5 acres of tillable land and pasture in southeast Minnesota's Dodge County, near Pine Island. The land has not been sprayed in seven or eight years, and fencing is installed around most of the tillable area. There are no outbuildings available. The price is negotiable; Beyst would be open to an arrangement where produce is traded and/or her teenage kids have an opportunity to work the land. Contact: Jennifer Beyst, 507-951-0851; jbeyst@pitel.net.

Seeking Farmland: SE MN

Michele D. Seif is seeking to buy farmland south of the Twin Cities or in southeast Minnesota. She would like tillable and pastured land, and the size is negotiable. A conventionally farmed history is okay. She would like a barn or other outbuildings for livestock, as well as a house. Seif would also prefer, but does not require, for the land to have fencing for livestock, some fruit or nut trees, and garden space. Contact: Michele D. Seif, 651-628-9265; mseif@mpls.k12.mn.us.

Seeking Farmland: New York

Angela Nelson is seeking to rent or buy 5-20 acres of tillable land in New York's Onondaga County, within 30 minutes of Syracuse. She would prefer land that has not been sprayed in 5-10 years, and that has water access. A house or outbuildings such as a barn would be nice, but are not required. Contact: Angela Nelson, 315-278-8171; Angnelson@gmail.com.

Farmland Available: NW WI

Mike and Sara Mustonen have for sale 80 acres of land in northwest Wisconsin's Bayfield County, near the community of Port Wing. The land is 40 acres pastured and 40 acres forested (last logged in the 1950s), and it has not been sprayed. There is a barn, but no house. There is a well, septic and pond. The price is \$160,000, or best offer. Contact: Mike or Sara Mustonen, 715-774-3223; mhmskm@cheqnet.net or skmmhm@cheqnet.net.

Seeking Farmer: E Central MN

Dave and Florence Minar are seeking someone to manage a grass-based certified organic dairy farm that produces milk for an on-farm creamery (www.cedarsummit.com) in Minnesota's Scott County, near the community of New Prague. The operation is 420 acres and there is a 150-cow milking herd. There is an opportunity to own livestock and equipment. The pay is a percentage of the milk check, plus profit sharing. Contact: Dave and Florence Minar, 952-212-9506; daveandflo@cedarsummit.com.

Seeking Internship/ Employment: MN

Aaron Halla is seeking an internship, employment or some other farming situation in Minnesota. Halla grew up on a dairy farm and developed his own herd in high school. He currently has a small dairy herd housed on a cousin's farm. He has a degree in exercise science and works as a personal trainer. Halla is interested in various types of farming, including livestock and vegetable production. Contact: Aaron Halla, 507-213-0904; aaron.halla@gmail.com.

Seeking Farmland: W MN

Ben Vadnais is seeking to rent or buy 40 to 400 acres of tillable and pastured land in western Minnesota's Swift County. He does not require a house and the grassland would not need existing fencing. He is seeking a landlord that will give a young farmer an opportunity to prove he can run a successful operation. Contact: Ben Vadnais, 320-760-4990; bvadnais@first-securitybanks.com.

Farmland Available: E Central MN

Kelly Fregien and Gwen Goretzas have for sale 63 acres of farmland in east-central Minnesota's Pine County, near Rush City and Rock Creek. The farm consists of tillable, forested and pastured acres, and it has not been sprayed in 15 years.

There is a barn, garage and a house. There are apple trees, as well as plum trees. Native grasses and wildflowers are enrolled in a DNR program. The asking price is \$270,000. See the listing at <http://msp.themlsonline.com/4021686.html>.

Contact: Brian Witte, Coldwell Banker, 320-358-0822; bwitte@realhomepro.com.

Learning while earning a living A young farmer reflects on finding work that's valued

By Jennifer Nelson

I work for Gardens of Eagan farm. I just began my third growing season. I love my job.

I recall a typical week during the 2010 growing season: I planted kale in our hoop house and lettuce in our fields, harvested peppers, basil, kale and tomatoes, washed cucumbers and watermelons, packed up the van and went to the farmers' market, sliced watermelons, roasted peppers, sold a lot of beautiful, certified organic produce, recorded and tracked sales, updated our website and talked to a lot of people about our community-owned farm.

The following week I repeated some of those tasks and added new ones, including teaching a class on how to freeze vegetables at a co-op in Saint Paul supporting the consumer education focus of the Organic Field School. My co-farmers are a passionate and compassionate group representing a variety of backgrounds besides farming: education, social justice, international development, Fortune 500 management, faith community, oil refinery work, music, carpentry, at-risk youth advocacy, and much more. We are Brazilian, Mexican, Ukrainian, Slovakian and U.S. citizens.

We also represent incredibly diverse and varied skill sets, accomplishments and learning opportunities had, and we come together each morning as a farm team. We have varied levels of farming experience and fill different roles, including farm manager, harvest and production manager, pack-shed coordinator, field and operations managers, harvest team leader, market coordinator, and harvest team member. We grow a lot of beautiful, delicious food, teach folks how to grow it and other folks how to choose and eat it.

Always, as we are farming and teaching, we are also learning. Most of us choose to work here because we believe in the value of locally grown, certified organic food and want lives that are centered in that belief. We're here to learn how to farm, although a few of us just really like working here, being on a team, participating in kale picking invitational tournaments, broccoli dance parties and World Cup soccer brackets.

Shared themes

We work hard, get dirty, and go home with some freshly harvested produce to eat and preserve for winter. Any farm, at heart, is its farmers. I recently spent time visiting with my co-farmers as we sorted tomatoes, ate our lunches and washed watermelons. Some themes emerged as we chatted:

→ We believe in the community-owned, established farm model. We want to work for an established farm with proven effective business practices and rich, mature organic land. We believe in the ideal of a co-op member community owning a farm. The community collaboration and resources provide countless local, organic food education

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“Always, as we are farming and teaching, we are also learning.”

• • •

and outreach opportunities. We are honored to work with soil that has been nurtured for many years, and proud of the quality food that we grow from it.

→ We want to learn to farm. My personal experience includes returning from teaching and traveling in Ecuador in 2009 with a fresh new teaching degree and a smile on my face. I sent a gazillion resumes into the cyber space of our weak economy to no avail. I rethought my pursuits. What do I really love? What can I do? I have experience with farmers' markets and I really wanted to learn more about farming. So I applied to be a market coordinator at Gardens of Eagan. Many of my co-farmers have a similar story.

→ We are working adults needing to make an hourly wage. Gardens of Eagan chooses to pay its farmers a living hourly wage. Many farms offer internships with a small stipend and room and board. But only a small demographic of our population has the life circumstances to enter that type of work

relationship.

Most of us have families and student loans and other financial responsibilities. I write from the common understanding that our society undervalues work that benefits children and people, like growing the food that sustains us. Farms like Gardens of Eagan are taking steps to make organic farming a financially viable opportunity. It is a courageous, risky and extremely important piece in the creation of our new food system.

The 'simple' life

One day last season I was talking on the phone with Rhys Williams, produce buyer at Co-op Partners, admittedly in a bit of a panic with 10 extra boxes of basil to sell. He reassured me, “At the end of the day, we're just trying to grow vegetables.”

Ah, the relief of simplicity. Simply, we are trying to learn to feed ourselves and others who want to eat quality, locally grown, certified organic food. I speak for my co-farmers in saying we are thankful for the opportunity to learn to grow vegetables. □

Jennifer Nelson is the market coordinator for Gardens of Eagan, a certified organic farm south of the Twin Cities. The farm is owned by the Wedge Community Co-op in Minneapolis and is home to the Organic Field School, which provides on-farm, organic and ecologically based education and research.

Opportunities



Resources

Farm linking resources

Land Link

MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service) offers an online service to connect those looking for farmland with those looking to rent or sell farmland.

Land Link-Up is available at www.mosesorganic.org/landlinkup.html. More information is also available by calling 715-778-5775 or e-mailing info@mosesorganic.org.

Midwest Farm Connection

Midwest Farm Connection, a project of the Land Connection, connects aspiring farmers with retiring farmers and farmland owners who have an interest in sustainable farming. For more information, see www.midwestfarmconnection.org or call 217-688-2570. □

Community Based Food Systems

Bringing the farm to the city Minneapolis moves forward with urban ag plan

By Sarah Claassen

Minneapolis took a significant step towards establishing city policy that addresses and supports urban agriculture on April 15. Thanks to the organizing of urban agriculture supporters throughout the city, on that day the Minneapolis City Council approved the Urban Agriculture Policy Plan (UAPP), which allows the city to amend its zoning and land use policies in such a way that urban agriculture is considered an accepted use of land. This plan creates more opportunities for food producing enterprises, community gardeners and farmers' markets in the city.

The passage of an effective UAPP was a victory for urban agriculture supporters, including the Land Stewardship Project, which organized to save important aspects of the plan that were threatened. In order to reach the City Council, the UAPP needed to be passed by the Minneapolis City Council Committee on Zoning and Planning, and several members of this committee indicated that they wanted to take out or drastically limit important parts of the plan.

For example, they wanted to remove the plan's ability to allow people who grow food in low-density residential districts to sell their production. Also proposed was limiting the policy tools available to residents and city staff for working with and encouraging urban agriculture.

These amendments would have severely hampered the UAPP, but urban farmers, gardeners, farmers' markets supporters and eaters took notice. LSP and others organized and spoke out to let members of the Zoning and Planning Committee know that Minneapolis needs to treat urban agriculture as a valued land use and an important strategy for developing vibrant cities, and that these proposed amendments were not a good idea.

LSP members hit the phones, calling their city council members to speak out in support of the plan and spreading the word to friends and neighbors. Residents circulated petitions and held meetings with key Zoning and Planning committee members. Council member Cam Gordon of Ward 2 was a strong ally on the Zoning and Planning Committee, demonstrating great support for the urban agriculture community.

As a result of this organizing, the Zoning and Planning Committee passed the UAPP unanimously on April 7. There were some changes, but the key points LSP supported were intact in the final plan. This paved the way for the full City Council to pass it on April 15. The passage of the UAPP means that the Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan



The Minneapolis Urban Ag Plan establishes new approaches to selling and leasing city-owned land, which could make it easier for community garden groups to gain access to garden space. (LSP photo)

has been amended to include the urban ag plan, and that the Minneapolis Department of Community and Economic Development (CPED) will begin implementing the changes. CPED estimates that these changes will be in effect in time for next year's growing season, in early 2012.

These changes include:

→ Amending the zoning code to include urban agriculture as a legitimate land use, defining urban agriculture uses such as market gardening and community gardening, and determining the districts in which these uses are accepted.

→ Setting development standards for urban agriculture uses to ensure that these activities are compatible with other uses like housing and business development.

→ Addressing urban agriculture through existing land use, zoning and city planning processes and practices, so that city staff and residents have appropriate tools for addressing and encouraging ur-

ban agriculture. These processes will treat urban agriculture as an accepted land use and part of the city-scape.

→ Supporting economic development through urban agriculture with the Homegrown Minneapolis Business Development Center, and conducting analyses of the economic impact of urban agriculture.

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The UAPP was drafted by CPED based on a recommendation from Homegrown Minneapolis, a citywide initiative to promote healthy, local foods. For the past year, LSP has been involved in the UAPP development process. We worked with members and partners to analyze the plan and generate public comments.

Our comments expressed general support for the plan, while calling for deeper changes to create more racial equity and long term access to land for urban ag.

LSP members and staff will remain engaged with the UAPP as it is implemented. We want to see this important step forward result in more people creating community based food systems in Minneapolis. □

Sarah Claassen is an organizer with LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program. She can be reached at 612-722-6377 or sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org. The Minneapolis Urban Agriculture Policy Plan is available at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/urban_ag_plan.asp.

Opportunities



Resources

Urban ag fact sheet

The Land Stewardship Project has developed a fact sheet on how better zoning laws can support the establishment of "urban agriculture" in cities. Urban ag is a way of growing and sourcing fresh food in metropolitan areas and includes community gardens, urban farms and farmers' markets.

Unfortunately, outdated zoning rules in many cities have served as deterrents to establishing such systems. As the above article explains, LSP's Community Based Food Systems program has been working on developing zoning rules in the Twin Cities that will be more urban ag friendly.

To download the fact sheet, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/21-Urban-Ag-Zoning.pdf. For a paper copy, contact LSP's Sarah Claassen at 612-722-6377 or sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Healthy food, healthy communities *There is a very important connection*

By Dana Jackson

Is organically grown produce more nutritious than conventionally grown? I avoid taking sides on that argument, because although I am an advocate for organic farming and organic food, I do not believe there is a large enough body of evidence to state conclusively that organic food contains more nutrients.

Is local produce more nutritious than produce grown in distant places?

State that question another way: is local produce, grown with organic and sustainable farming practices, more nutritious than produce grown in distant places with similar farming practices? I think so. That conclusion is based on a simple concept: vitamins lose potency over time, so fruits and vegetables grown close by and delivered quickly from field to plate will be more nutritious. Even then, there are qualifying factors, such as the methods used in washing, cooling, storing and delivering produce after harvest.

But these aren't the important questions to ask about nutrition, and they are not the questions the Land Stewardship Project is addressing. LSP is addressing nutrition and public health in the context of where we have historically worked—where concerns about the health of the land, healthy food, healthy people and healthy communities are all connected. This year we're finding those connections through work funded by the Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program and the Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Eating Minnesota Program in three Minnesota counties: Washington, Big Stone and Winona.

Obesity is a widely discussed public health concern, followed by how to get people to eat more fruits and vegetables and fewer carbohydrates, sugars and fats which lead to obesity and diseases such as diabetes. The Minnesota Department of Health reports that 81 percent of Minnesotans consume less than the recommended five daily servings of fruits and vegetables, and more than 315,000 Minnesotans reported having diabetes in 2009. The overall financial burden of obesity in Minnesota, based on national estimates,

was \$1.3 billion in 2004. But appealing to individuals to change their eating habits hasn't been very successful.

The Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program, also known as SHIP, became law in 2008. It authorizes the State Department of Health and Environment to give grants to county public health departments to combat obesity and smoking by changing policies, practices and environments that would make healthy choices the easy choices for citizens. Improving access to nutritious foods, particularly fruits and



The “Fresh Green Bucks” program is a creative way to get fresh produce into local food shelves. Shown here are Bruce Selvig, owner of Bruce’s IGA in Wyoming, Minn., and Jennifer Carr of Community Helping Hands in Forest Lake, Minn. (photo by Ann DeLa Vergne)

vegetables, was a key strategy chosen by Washington County to combat obesity, as is explained on its new website, www.livinghealthywc.org: “Eating right is easier with healthy food options close at hand. Living Healthy in Washington County works to make fresh, affordable, unprocessed foods, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains readily available to residents.”

Although it is unprecedented for LSP to contract with county government agencies to do particular work, the goals of SHIP add value to the goals of our Community Based Food Systems Program. And LSP’s experience of community organizing to engage stakeholders and build leadership makes the organization a good fit for this public health

challenge.

The St. Croix River Valley *Buy Fresh Buy Local*® chapter, which is part of LSP’s Community Based Food Systems Program, has been promoting farmers’ markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms and direct farmer sales to restaurants and institutions since it was organized in 2006. One of its four major goals is “to increase the consumption of local, healthful food,” which overlaps with Washington County’s goal to improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables. This public health focus also provides an opportunity for local sustainable farmers, especially *Buy Fresh Buy Local* farmer partners, to improve their financial health as LSP’s work expands markets.

The CSA connection

In March, when LSP’s *2011 CSA Directory* appeared on our website and in print, and CSA farmers were actively recruiting members for the upcoming season, LSP and Washington County SHIP presented three “To Join Or Not To Join a CSA Farm” consumer workshops in three different locations. At each workshop, two CSA farmers and one CSA member explained how farms distribute shares of vegetables they grow each week to members. They also answered questions about share size, farm visits and price ranges. The major goal of the workshops was to interest residents in CSA shares, because people who pay up-front for weekly deliveries of seasonal vegetables usually eat more vegetables. We also wanted to help participants understand enough about CSA membership to determine if it fit their lifestyles and know which questions to ask to choose the right CSA farm.

Out of 71 participants turning in evaluations at the end of the workshops, 52 responded that they were likely to join a CSA and 12 said that they definitely would join, so CSA farms should be delivering more boxes of vegetables in Washington County this season.

The connection between health and consumption of vegetables was underscored via the co-sponsorship by a local Minnesota health care institution at each workshop: Lakeview Health in Stillwater, Fairview Medical Center in Hugo, and Woodwinds Health Campus in Woodbury.

LSP’s major responsibility for the Washington County SHIP has been to organize three Community Nutrition Action Committees (CNAC) to choose and create projects

Health, see page 25...

that increase citizens' access to fruits and vegetables, with special attention to low income populations. LSP's Ann DeLa Vergne has been the community coordinator, responsible for recruiting committee members and facilitating their work.

During the fall, she organized six CNAC meetings in each of three Minnesota communities: the Hugo/Forest Lake area, Stillwater/Bayport/Mahtomedi area and the Woodbury/Cottage Grove area. By the end of that period, the committees, which included 10 LSP members, had chosen to spend the winter months further exploring projects related to community gardens, food shelves and community kitchens.

DeLa Vergne has been working with interested citizens in Landfall, Oakdale and Forest Lake to find land (such as open spaces in church yards, land around government buildings or in parks) for community gardens and come together to start such gardens in the spring. She organized two community garden workshops (open to the public) in February and March, and enlisted John McPherson at Carpenter Nature Center near Hastings to host a fruit tree workshop on April 6, and will provide further assistance as gardens develop.

In March, the Ascension Episcopal

Church in Stillwater began the process of certifying its kitchen for use as a community kitchen, which will enable it to offer cooking classes for different audiences, some through Stillwater's River Market Community Co-op. The church will also partner with community gardens to source fresh vegetables for dinners prepared by the church for low income citizens. During the next few months, River Market Co-op will be offering cooking classes (taught by LSP member Sara Morrison) in the community kitchen.

Fresh Green Bucks\$

An innovative program now called "Fresh Green Bucks\$" was proposed by a food shelf manager in Hugo to offer more fresh produce to food shelf clients during winter months. In late April, Fresh Green Buck\$ was piloted in four Minnesota locations: Festival Foods in Hugo working with the Hugo Community Food Shelf, River Market Community Co-op in Stillwater working with Valley Outreach in Stillwater, Bruce's IGA in Wyoming working with Community Helping Hands in Forest Lake, and Festival Foods in White Bear Lake working with the Mahtomedi Area Food Shelf. Shoppers are able to pick up Fresh Green Buck\$ coupons worth \$5, \$10 or \$20 and take them to the checkout counter where

the cost will be added to their bill. The food shelf can spend 100 percent of the total dollar amount donated through Fresh Green Buck\$ to buy fresh fruits and vegetables at that grocery store, and they can be saved up to redeem in the winter or used any time the food shelf needs fresh produce.

"Fresh produce is not abundant in food shelves, especially after the growing season ends in Minnesota," says DeLa Vergne. "With Fresh Green Buck\$, the food shelves will be able to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables and provide healthy food choices for the hungry year round."

The policies and practices of grocery stores, food shelves, local governments and zoning commissions, as well as a church, are being changed in Washington County to increase citizens' access to fruits and vegetables.

From an LSP perspective, consumers are paying more attention to where food comes from and learning to make healthier choices that will increase demand for fresh, local produce grown by sustainable farmers. □

Dana Jackson coordinates the St. Croix River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local chapter out of LSP's Twin Cities office. She can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or danaj@landstewardship-project.org.

Making the connection between health & food in SE & W MN

Healthy eating in western Minnesota

Rebecca Terk works for LSP in western Minnesota's Big Stone County on the South Dakota border, with funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Eating Minnesota Program. Her work to increase access to fresh local produce as a strategy to improve diets and combat obesity often works in tandem with Countryside Public Health, which operates several projects in a five-county area using funds from the Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program. Terk serves on the Big Stone County Leadership Team helping to coordinate these efforts.

The Big Stone Lake Area Farmers' market is held on Tuesday nights and Saturday mornings in Ortonville, the county seat. As a result of LSP's organizing and working with local producers, the farmers' market's organizers decided to relocate the very slow Tuesday market to Clinton in order to increase sales and offer fresh, local foods in a rural area of the county.

Terk has also connected a local producer, Jan Eifealdt of Sunrise View Farm, to Bonnie Kay Carlson of Bonnie's Hometown Grocery in Clinton. Carlson will stock her new produce display cooler, purchased with Blue Cross Blue Shield funds, with Eifealdt's fresh, local produce in-season. Terk hopes to connect more rural grocery stores to local producers to increase the availability and selection of produce in rural areas.

Terk's most recent project is to organize a "ServSave" correspondence course study group for the Big Stone Lake area (both Minnesota and South Dakota sides of the border). The course will help those interested in working in commercial and institutional kitchens, food service and catering, as well as small producers who

need to learn safe food handling and preparation in order to do some processing to add value to their crops.

Healthy eating in SE MN

In addition to helping fruit and vegetable growers develop safe and efficient systems of processing, LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program in southeast Minnesota is helping farmers focus on efficient transportation to get that food quickly to consumers in the area, with nutrients intact. With financial support from SHIP in Winona County and the University of Minnesota's Sustainable Regional Development Partnership, Caroline van Schaik in LSP's Lewiston office is working to get local produce from sustainable farmers to school kitchens. This winter, she connected farmers to a Winona County distributor of food and other supplies to rural schools, and together they successfully piloted the delivery of farmers' fresh produce. This arrangement will save the farmers transportation and labor costs and schools like the greater efficiency of one familiar delivery (*see page 26*).

If proposed USDA changes to school breakfast and lunch plates become law, school demand for fresh vegetables and fruits will climb. "Buying produce that was bred and grown for eating rather than shipping and storage, and then getting it delivered on one truck, will help schools meet these pending regulations and provide more nutritious foods to children," says van Schaik.

To help farmers calculate their own transportation costs and understand how they figure into successful marketing, LSP held workshops in western Minnesota during April. We are planning a similar workshop for southeast Minnesota in July (*see page 27*).

Community Based Food Systems

Meals on wheels

Field to fork efficiency is about more than a low odometer reading

By Caroline van Schaik

It started with sweet potatoes: 50 pounds and a question of whether to drive to the school or let a local distributor drop them off with the milk. To save time, the farmer went with the distributor.

Then another reality check: the school ordered baking potatoes from a different farmer, who said she wasn't coming into town until the following week because rising gas prices have forced her to limit her trips. The school waited, and 10 days later the potatoes arrived (again with the milk).

Figuring out how best to deliver, literally, on the growing demand for local food is not an issue for every farmer or every store, restaurant or school. But for those who want on board the "local food" train, getting it to the kitchen is a leading worry. For farmers, it is a myth that being close by means low transportation costs. Fuel efficiency is typically lower because loads are smaller for farmers who deliver directly to their customers, according to a USDA study led by the University of Minnesota's Rob King (see sidebar below). Researchers in Iowa (www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/grants/files/2006-M02.pdf) report that the cost per mile of a minivan is almost 15 times that of a full semi-trailer with driver. King's numbers also suggest a financial advantage for farmers who pool their products to deliver

through an intermediary firm.

Trying hard to keep the face of the farmer on their food, farmers are spending unknown amounts of money to safeguard the food story there isn't time to tell in a 14-hour day on the road. There surely are better ways.

Here is a real example: go back to that box of sweet potatoes and compare the \$5 delivery fee to \$30 for fuel (\$0.50/mile times 40 miles round trip) and labor (\$10/hour), not to mention repairs, insurance,



A Ziebell's truck makes a delivery to Ridgeway Community School. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

depreciation and financing that are genuine costs to driving any vehicle. It takes only a minute to realize that opportunity knocks for farmers who hitchhike their goods on a truck already leaving town.

And this jives with findings from a Land Stewardship Project survey conducted in 2008: with "time" named as their number one issue, some 80 percent of farmer re-

spondents said a distributor within 50 miles of their farm would be great. This brings us to Ziebell's Hiawatha Foods, Inc., which was started in 1975 and now delivers food and other products to a myriad of schools and other institutions and restaurants within 50 miles or so of the southeast Minnesota community of Winona, including forays into Wisconsin. Current owner John McCoy is proving to be a willing partner with LSP and the region's sustainable farmers.

These past few months, McCoy has worked with staff in LSP's Lewiston office, along with several LSP member-farmers, to figure out how to get the area's stewardship food delivered on his trucks. Starting with that box of sweet potatoes, so far so good — and good not just for Ziebell's.

Since this need for timely delivery was politely but unequivocally voiced last year by the cook at the nearby Ridgeway Community School (see the Spring 2010 *Land Stewardship Letter*), that institution's kitchen is the pilot destination. Staff members there are learning how to order in-sync with farmer deliveries to Ziebell's as well as Ziebell's delivery schedule, and to incorporate what is available into the school menu.

On the distributor's end, details such as scheduling and labels have been addressed. For farmers, experience this past winter has highlighted the need for an "availability list" and to pencil out the utility of using a distributor versus driving their own vehicles.

It's about 17 miles from the Ziebell's warehouse to the Ridgeway school. That doesn't sound far, but as a back-of-the-envelope calculation, let's say you are a farmer delivering to the school and your vehicle

Transportation, see page 27...

Making local efficient

Being closer to your market doesn't necessarily equal a significant savings in fuel costs, but aggregation of farmers' products can compensate for the inefficiencies inherent in the smaller loads of local deliveries. That is one of the conclusions of a recent USDA study.

"Transportation fuel use is more closely related to supply chain structure and size than to the distance food products travel," concluded the study, *Comparing the Structure, Size, and Performance of Local and Mainstream Food Supply Chains*.

Even if you're only driving 20 miles to your market, pooling your tomatoes with five of your neighbors onto one vehicle is

more efficient than six of you driving separately to that same market. Such small-scale aggregation can even win efficiency-wise when compared to large semi-loads of products, according to the study.

The report is based on 15 case studies and examines supply chain types for each of five product-place combinations: Twin Cities (beef); Syracuse, N.Y. (apples); Portland, Ore. (blueberries); Sacramento, Calif. (spring mix leafy greens); and Washington, D.C. (milk).

The authors found that farmers who participate in local food chains can earn as much as seven times the price earned by selling through mainstream systems that consist of numerous "middlemen." But there's a catch. Although farmers in direct market supply chains retain nearly 100 percent of the retail price, costs

incurred to bring their product to market can swallow up between 13 percent and 62 percent of the net profit.

By building relationships with mainstream processors and distributors, farmers can get their food to eaters more efficiently, concludes the study. Of course, that means less of the retail price will go into the farmer's pocket. But farmers could make up for that through "product differentiation." That may mean capturing more of the consumer dollar by using sustainable practices — such as organic or grass-fed — that eaters are willing to pay more for.

For a copy of *Comparing the Structure, Size, and Performance of Local and Mainstream Food Supply Chains*, see www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err99.

averages 15 miles per gallon. You make the 34-mile round trip with gas at \$2.50 per gallon and your time at \$10 per hour for one hour. That equals \$15.67 *just* for fuel and labor. No insurance. No repairs or maintenance. No tires. No depreciation.

If you hauled \$100 worth of food to that school, you could have had a firm like Ziebell's do the job for something like \$10, and saved you the effort. If you sold the same \$100 worth of food to each of seven other schools, you'd have made the same single trip to Ziebell's, but with that much more product to pay the way to markets you might never choose to drive to yourself.

Especially for those farmers already heading to Winona markets, paying for the trip with more product on board is business at its best. McCoy prefers his trucks to drive full; farmers should aim for the same utility.

Farmers tell me they barely catch a breath on delivery days so that all-important face time would be better spent another day, when you can drive your passenger car around to customers with samples, business cards and a relaxed frame of mind on board.

Next steps down the road

Ziebell's is eager for the volume to pick up — and we are too. McCoy's company will try to be what surveyed farmers asked for — a local distributor going to more markets than any one farmer is likely to cover.

For the moment, cooks place their orders directly with farmers, but that too could change if McCoy realizes that local products could help him sell more macaroni and

Transportation workshops

Few of us grasp the full measure of expenses behind transporting ourselves — or our products — from point A to point B, and an LSP survey proved farmers to be no different. Hidden, ignored, or otherwise, the cost of moving a bunch of rosemary or a side of beef from the farm to a customer adds up. By some calculations, farmers are spending an excessive amount of money and hours that might be better allocated to a shared vehicle, a distributor or other alternative.

As a result, LSP staff members have been hosting workshops to help farmers understand why transportation costs are critical to their farm business and to train farmers to make smarter decisions based on their own calculations. These workshops feature recent research and farmer testimony about transportation costs. Participants have been given the chance to crunch their own transportation numbers using an online worksheet from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. The workshops end with a discussion of alternatives that might save time, fuel and yes, sanity, without sacrificing what many direct market farmers hold as dear — their face on that food.

Workshops were held in the western Minnesota communities of Litchfield and Morris in April. The next workshop will be in southeast Minnesota sometime in July. For details on the July workshop, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.

paper towels. Similarly, it remains to be seen if those potato farmers and others who are primed for spring product take advantage of this marketing opportunity to approach other schools along the way.

There are other considerations behind this practical approach. Every person between a farmer and the eater needs to earn some pennies for their efforts and, as King's study highlights, typically the price comes at the expense of the farmer's take-home. But Johnice Cross, coordinator of the Decorah, Iowa, community farming cooperative, GROWN Locally, insists that a farmer must start with what she terms "a dignity price," and add on from there. The success of the cooperative stands in no small part on the strength of that commitment to a fair price

— for consumers, yes, *and* for farmers.

The landscape of our future isn't resting entirely on the axle of a truck. But when we consider child nutrition, obesity, a fair price, resilient communities, grassland birds, clean water and frogs, there's a good deal to be gained by re-evaluating the framework of local food distribution. □

Caroline van Schaik works on community based food issues in LSP's southeast Minnesota office in Lewiston. Among other things, she has helped the Ridgeway Community School launch a farm to school initiative. She can be contacted at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.

Local Food Forum & Expo features farm to school talk

"Well, I actually disagree with the girls," said 11-year-old Ben Maynard (*third from the right*) during a panel presentation at the 6th annual Local Food Forum and Expo held March 12 in Winona, Minn. Maynard, Chloe Ferguson and Emma Iremonger are fifth graders at Ridgeway Community School, and they described "the good, the bad and the funny" about eating locally grown fruits and vegetables at area schools. The students told the audience that sampling food works best when everyone gets to try some, that Whitewater Gardens' carrots are the best even when they are forked, and that trying new things even when not grown nearby was good. Maynard's point of contention was over whether annuals or perennials should be planted in the school garden.

LSP is a member of the Local Foods Committee of the Winona County Economic Development Authority, which sponsors the Expo each March to engage residents in community food work. For more information on LSP's Community Based Food Systems work in southeast Minnesota, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. (*photo by Caroline van Schaik*)





This Perennial Land Third Crops, Blue Earth, and the Road to a Restorative Agriculture

By Lansing Shepard
& Paula Westmoreland
2011; 165 pages
Perennial Lands
www.thisperennialland.com

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

S ometime back I got a little lost while driving through Minnesota's Renville County, one of the top corn and soybean producing regions in the country. After driving mile-after-mile past row crop fields and their ramrod straight lines of demarcation, I suddenly came upon a lazy, looping line of trees and grass hugging the banks of Beaver Creek. Some of the fields the creek ran through were too steep or too wet to produce high yields of corn and beans on a consistent basis. As a result, here and there odd spots had been returned to nature—native prairie flourished and even a few stands of trees had been allowed to creep beyond the safe confines of the creek's riparian zone. Some of this re-naturing appeared to be through benign neglect, while other areas were obviously set aside via government initiatives like the Conservation Reserve Program.

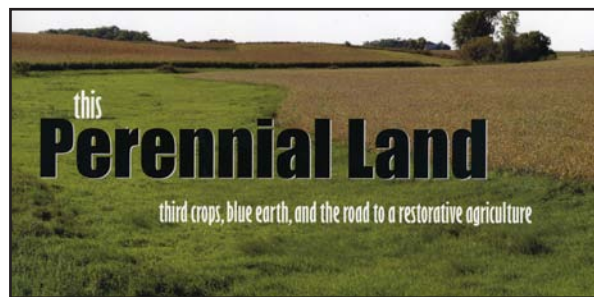
I had stumbled upon what Lansing Shepard and Paula Westmoreland would call "opportunity lands"—lands in the midst of farm country that would be better off in grass, trees and wetland habitat. These are lands that farmers get a good crop out of maybe one out of three or four growing seasons. They are also lands that can provide significant ecological services in the form of cleaner water, healthier soil and more wildlife habitat. And they can produce one more great dividend: a healthier local economy.

This Perennial Land: Third Crops, Blue Earth and the Road to a Restorative Agriculture is about spying such opportunities in farm country, and taking advantage of them. The authors know that a book about finding such opportunities in the 100,000 square miles that make up the Midwestern Corn Belt would be overwhelming. So instead, *This Perennial Land* focuses on one watershed: the greater Blue Earth River region, a 2.3 million acre basin in southern Minnesota that's been intensely farmed for decades.

Shepard is a writer who specializes in conservation, environmental policy and natural history. Westmoreland is an agro-ecologist who co-founded the Minnesota-based Permaculture Institute for Cold Climate. They use their expertise and writing skills (along with beautiful professional photos) to take us on a journey through an agricultural region that's full of natural surprises.

It's clear Shepard and Westmoreland believe that in order to know where we're going, we need to know where we've been. They do an excellent job of providing some ancient and not-so-ancient history of the Blue Earth basin. They then bring it into present times, explaining why, for example, the way soil was formed by the last glaciers creates such a problem for farmers trying to drain farm fields.

Using sophisticated maps developed



by natural resource agencies, one-on-one interviews with farmers, scientists and other residents of the basin, as well as firsthand observation, Shepard and Westmoreland paint a picture of a region that is more than just a black desert of corn and soybeans. One description provides a hint as to just how much time the authors spent observing the landscape:

"In the dying light of this late July day, the scene before us could have been an updated version of one of those eighteenth century landscape paintings...Prairie grasses and wildflowers descend a facing slope to the water's edge, while out on a spit of land, a snow-white egret strikes a pose over its inverted image."

This book uses descriptions like that, coupled with those beautiful landscape photographs, to make the reader care about a place like the basin, and to see the "opportunities" it offers beyond feeding the insatiable maw of the multinational grain trade. But this is no coffee table book—although it is laid out in a large-format style—that's just pretty to look at. It goes on to use detailed maps to show the opportunities that are available on a landscape level, pointing out specific areas where the soil is poorly

drained, extremely steep, or otherwise a prime candidate to be converted from row crops to perennial systems such as pasture, hay, trees or prairie.

All of the natural opportunities in the world would mean little without the most important cog in the wheel: people. Many of the essays describe farmers, scientists, conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts who see the possibilities the Blue Earth holds. It's striking how many farmland conservation projects—a prairie planting here, a wetland there—were prompted by a simple love of hunting, or just a feeling that some sort of natural legacy needed to be taken forward.

The overriding message is: when these various personalities team up, great things can happen. These teams emphasize utilizing the energies and talents of local people, but also aren't above adopting cutting-edge farming and conservation techniques that have been perfected elsewhere.

Another important element that can't be ignored is the economy. Sometimes hunting groups or other natural resource entities will pay for a restored wetland or prairie. But where will the financial incentives come to get more of the land betwixt and between restored natural areas put into perennial, environmentally friendly systems? Should we just sacrifice that in-between land to industrial ag?

No, say the authors. They describe the town of Madelia (pop. 2,400), and how an energetic woman named Linda Meschke is bringing together farmers, biofuel companies, city officials and a hodgepodge of others to create a financial incentive for farmers to add a "third crop" to their corn-soybean rotation. The idea is that eventually farmers within 25 miles of the town will be growing perennials such as prairie grass that will be processed into biofuel. If it works, more soil will be covered year-round, carbon will be sequestered, homegrown energy will be available to the community, and farmers will make money.

The authors wrap up the book with a "what-if" scenario. What if we create policy and economic conditions that support more perennial plant systems on more diverse farms? That part of the book is fun, just as all fantasies are for a while.

Can the lessons imparted in *This Perennial Land* be applied in other agricultural basins? Yes. It just requires taking the time to look, and look in a way that we truly "see" the options available in what many dismiss as a "black desert." The opportunities are there: both in the land and the people. □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

Leavings

By Wendell Berry

2010; 132 pages

Counterpoint

www.counterpointpress.com

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

Much of Wendell Berry's work over the years revolves around the themes of place, as well as environmental and social justice. *Leavings*, his most recent collection of poetry, stays true to these themes.

This volume contains both new and previously published works and addresses a number of issues, including war and peace and the degradation of the land, in particular mountain top removal in eastern Kentucky, a practice that Berry has long opposed.

Berry also draws on fictional characters from his previous works, such as Jayber Crow, who lent his name to the title of the 2000 novel about Berry's fictional community of Port William. Berry also uses this poetry to describe family relationships—one describes his grandson watching him mow hay much as he watched his own grandfather mow hay many decades ago.

The poetry in this collection also draws images of the natural world, such as herons fishing in creeks that are threatened by pollution and the destructive presence of locusts. This imagery creates a collection of poems that will be easily read and appreciated by anyone who enjoyed Berry's past essays, poems and fictional work, or cares about the natural world and the impact we have on it.

This collection has something for everyone: outdoor imagery for individuals who enjoy being in the natural world; calls for social justice for those who, like Berry, have a passion for the moral implications of our lives on others; and descriptions of generational family relationships for those who value family traditions.

Leavings is vintage Berry, connecting people to the land and all of creation, while allowing for the imagination provided by the characters residing in Berry's fictional world. As with all of Berry's work, his love and concern for the land, both as place and

a natural resource for those who work it and appreciate it as a place of identity, provides a common thread. □

Land Stewardship Project member and frequent volunteer Dale Hadler has a master's degree in religion and theology from the United Theological Seminary in the Twin Cities.

People of the Sturgeon Wisconsin's Love Affair With an Ancient Fish

By Kathleen Schmitt Kline, Ron Bruch & Fred Binkowski

Photographs by Bob Rashid

2009; 320 pages

Wisconsin Historical Society Press

www.wisconsinhistory.org

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

During a conversation around my family's dinner table in the summer of 1971, my mother was discussing a vacation Bible class she was teaching at the First Presbyterian Church of Winneconne, Wis. She talked about discussing the Old Testament story of Jonah and the big fish. One student's response was that, "The big fish could have been a sturgeon Mrs. Hadler."

This personal account describes one of the themes of the book *People of the Sturgeon: Wisconsin's Love Affair With an Ancient Fish*—the cultural importance of the sturgeon to the people of Wisconsin's Lake Winnebago drainage basin.

At first blush, *People of the Sturgeon* seems like an unusual selection for the *Land Stewardship Letter*—it may appear to have very little to do with agriculture and a lot to do with the cultural significance of a fish that has remained basically unchanged since the time of the dinosaurs. But although this book is primarily about the cultural, spiritual and economic significance of this fish, it is also about how communities with different interests can work together to save a resource that is important to each of them for different reasons.

People of the Sturgeon starts by describing how this fish survived for millions of years in the Lake Winnebago drainage basin, only to be almost fished to extinction by the end of the 19th Century. The book then goes on to show how the fish was rescued by a

series of public/private initiatives to create the world's healthiest sturgeon fishery.

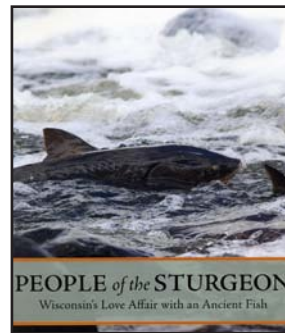
This book describes how poachers were converted to fish protectors and how the Menominee Indians of the Upper Wolf and Oconto rivers had a very ancient, almost familial, relationship with this fish that they called "Nama'o." In fact, during the 1930s leaders of this community began to challenge the Wisconsin Conservation Commission to address what they feared was a substantial decline of sturgeon populations due to dam construction and degradation of the upper Wolf and Oconto river basins. Through this pressure and cooperative relationships with other concerned groups, they were able to reverse this trend by having many of the dams removed and the water cleaned up. As a result, the modern Menominee community has been able to resume its spiritual practices of dances and prayers that revolve around this ancient fish.

Another factor this book explores is the economic impact of this fish, especially on restaurants, gas stations, taverns and resorts that are dependent on income from anglers who participate in the Lake Winnebago sturgeon spearing season. Many of these establishments do a brisk business during the spearing season catering to the needs of anglers, and derive an economic benefit from these patrons. They also realize that a healthy, sustainable sturgeon population is vital to their economic well-being, and are strong allies of other sturgeon conservation advocates such as anglers and the Menominee nation.

A particularly effective coalition is Sturgeon for Tomorrow, a group of anglers, environmentalists and others concerned about the wellbeing of this fish. This group monitors the fish during its spawning and works in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to protect both the fish and its spawning grounds.

Although it does not touch directly on the themes of sustainable agriculture and family farming, *People of the Sturgeon* contains lessons useful to anyone concerned about natural resource conservation. It describes how groups with different motivations can work together to preserve a resource that has a social, cultural, spiritual and recreational value to each of them.

This is a message of hope to anyone concerned about the protection and conservation of any natural resource: water, wildlife, forest or land. A message that any Land Stewardship Project member would find encouraging. □





LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Membership Update

507-523-3366, lspse@landstewardship-project.org.
 → **Tom Taylor**, LSP Montevideo office, 320-269-2105, ttaylor@landstewardship-project.org.
 → **Abby Liesch**, LSP Twin Cities office, 612-722-6377, aliesch@landstewardship-project.org.

The power of LSP membership

By Megan Smith

Farmer-Labor Tractorcade in WI

A contingent of Land Stewardship Project members from Wisconsin attended and participated in the Farmer-Labor Tractorcade at the state Capitol in Madison, Wis., on March 12. The crowd, which swelled to over 100,000 people, is believed to be the largest protest in the state's history. The event was organized by Family Farm Defenders and Wisconsin Farmers Union.



LSP members joined over 100,000 people in a Farmer-Labor Tractorcade at the state Capitol in Madison, Wis., on March 12. (photo by Megan Smith)

community based food systems, help new farmers get started and shape policies that support family farms and a healthy environment.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact:

→ **Karen Benson**, LSP Lewiston office,

Joining or renewing?

Consider becoming a sustaining LSP member. As a monthly pledger, you are helping build a food and farming system that cares for people and the land, and your LSP membership is current as long as your pledge is active (no more renewal reminders). If you have questions about the status of your membership or would like to set up a monthly or quarterly pledge, contact Abby Liesch at 612-722-6377 or aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org.

Staying cyber connected with LSP

LSP is now in more places online. Connect with LSP through *Facebook*, *YouTube*, the *Looncommons* blog, the *Ear to the Ground* podcast, the *LIVE-WIRE* e-letter, *Twitter*, and via our website to keep up-to-date on the latest LSP events, news and action alerts. ☐

Megan Smith is an LSP membership assistant. She can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardshipproject.org.

Membership growth

It is true that the more members we have, the more we can accomplish. Today LSP's membership is growing and membership renewal rates are at an all-time high. Thank you: together we can accomplish what we can't do alone.

Seward Co-op selects LSP for SEED donation program

Throughout the month of April, the Seward Co-op asked its customers to round up their bills for the Land Stewardship Project. The Co-op's SEED program is a new way to give back to organizations helping advance sustainable agriculture and community development. Through the program, shoppers were asked to round up their bill to the next dollar, with the proceeds going to LSP. LSP is honored to be the first organization selected for this new donation program and extends a big thank you to the Seward Co-op. More information about the SEED Program can be found at www.seward.coop/seed.

Volunteer for LSP

Donating your time to LSP is a very valuable gift. There is a lot going on in the coming months and we could use your help. Volunteering is a great way to stay connected to the work LSP is doing to build

Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer work-place giving as an option in making our communities better places to live. Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to:

- promote the sustainability of our rural communities and family farms;
- protect Minnesotans from health hazards;
- educate citizens and our youth on conservation efforts;
- preserve wilderness areas, parks, wetlands and wildlife habitat.



MINNESOTA
Environmental Fund

You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund. Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For more information, contact LSP's Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377, or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

Continue your land's legacy by donating it to LSP

The Land Stewardship Project has launched an initiative that allows property owners to continue their family's legacy on the land while supporting the work of the organization as well as beginning farmers. This is a gifting opportunity for people who have a vital connection to a piece of land and want to maintain that legacy while supporting the work of LSP.

"When people have dedicated themselves to a given piece of land, their investment of stewardship transcends any given value," says Dan Guenther, an Osceola, Wis., farmer and former LSP Board member.

Through *Land & Stewardship Legacies*, LSP can accept gifts of farmland and other real estate. The *Stewardship Legacy* secures financial resources to support the work of LSP now and into the future. The *Land Legacy* is distinguished by accepting gifts of suitable parcels of farmland to serve as incubators for beginning farmers, or sold outright to promising graduates of LSP's

Farm Beginnings program. For details, check the *Land & Stewardship Legacies* web page at www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus-land-legacies.html, or call LSP Executive Director George Boody at 612-722-6377.

LSP is partnering with the Minnesota Real Estate Foundation, which has excellent resources and guidelines for people who are interested in exploring various avenues for donating real estate to charities. In upcoming issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter*,

we will be featuring a "Did you know..." series from the Real Estate Foundation that highlights ways of making charitable real estate gifting a satisfying, sustainable experience. Below is the latest installment in this series:

Did you know...

The Minnesota Real Estate Foundation has worked with donors wishing to gift their vacation homes. The Foundation has facilitated gifts of vacation homes as an outright gift, a gift with a retained life estate, a gift of a 40 percent tenants in common interest, and a gift used to fund a charitable remainder trust.

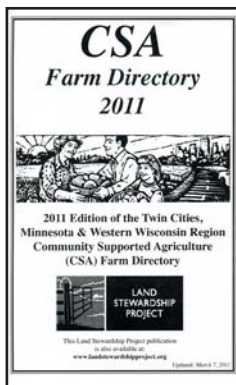
Donors receive an immediate charitable tax deduction and benefit their favorite charities. Vacation properties for many owners have appreciated substantially over the past 20 years. Now may be an excellent time to consider gifting all or part of the property to meet a current community need.



2011 CSA Directory

The 2011 edition of the Land Stewardship Project's *CSA Farm Directory* is available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/csa.html. Paper copies are available at LSP's offices in Minneapolis (612-722-6377), Lewiston (507-523-3366) and Montevideo (320-269-2105).

This year's *Directory* features over 75 farms that deliver local food to the Twin Cities, as well as communities in out-state Minnesota and western Wisconsin. □



Take part in LSP's CSA member survey

Are you a current or former member of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm? The Land Stewardship Project wants to hear from you.

LSP is exploring what can be done to strengthen the role of CSA farms as viable businesses and as a transformative model for changing our food and farming system.

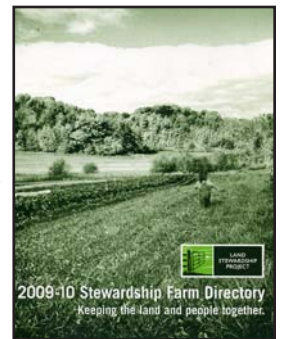
To complete a short survey on your CSA membership experience, see www.landstewardshipproject.org.

LSP Farm Directory

The Land Stewardship Project's 2011-2012 *Stewardship Farm Directory* is now available at www.landstewardshipproject.org.

The *Directory* is a guide to LSP members who direct-market goods from their farm or operate businesses that support locally produced foods and farm products. Farmers and retailers listed in the directory offer a wide range of products, such as meat, milk, cheese, eggs, fruits and vegetables, Christmas trees, honey, flowers, wool and more.

For more information or to receive a free paper copy of the *Directory*, contact LSP's Abby Liesch at aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org, or call 612-722-6377. □



Thank you!

The Land Stewardship Project is grateful to have received gifts made in the name of loved ones over the past few months.

Membership in honor of Ivan & Lillian Stade
◆ Ian Stade

Donation to honor Dennis Johnson on his retirement from the U of M
◆ Sister Kathleen Mary Kiemen

In memory of Kerrine Thomson
◆ Many relatives & friends

In memory of Lester W. Swanson
◆ Suzanne M. Swanson

For details on donating to LSP in the name of someone, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

Get current with

LIVE  WIRE


Sign up for the *LIVE-WIRE* to get monthly e-mail updates from the Land Stewardship Project. To subscribe, call 612-722-6377 or e-mail aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org, and put in the subject line, "Subscribe *LIVE-WIRE*." □



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STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

- **MAY 21—Introduction to Grazing Farm Beginnings Field Day & Workshop**, St. Charles, Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **MAY 22—Farm Beginnings Farm Dreams workshop**, Hutchinson, Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **MAY 23—Permaculture Research Institute Cold Climate Urban Homestead Design Workshop**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: 314-922-9282; www.pricoldclimate.org
- **MAY 30—Permaculture Research Institute Cold Climate Urban Homestead Design Workshop**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: 314-922-9282; www.pricoldclimate.org
- **JUNE—LSP meeting on making land available for food production in Washington County, Minn.** (*details to be announced*); Contact: Dana Jackson, LSP, 612-722-6377; danaj@landstewardshipproject.org
- **JUNE 4—Introduction to Grazing Farm Beginnings Field Day & Workshop**, Benson, Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **JUNE 4—SFA GrazeFest**, Mill City Farmers' Market, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org; 763-260-0209
- **JUNE 4—Permaculture Research Institute Cold Climate Urban Homestead Design Workshop**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: 314-922-9282; www.pricoldclimate.org
- **JUNE 10-11—LSP Holistic Mgt. Planned Grazing class**, western Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **JUNE 13—WEI Organic Farm School: Can Organic Farming Save the World?**, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: 651-583-0705; www.w-e-i.org
- **JUNE 20—WEI Organic Farm School: What is Organic?** (*see June 13*)
- **JUNE 25—Fertility & Soil Management**

Farm Beginnings Field Day, Altura, Minn. (*see page 16*)

- **JUNE 26—Farm Beginnings Tour of Easy Yoke Farm & Heart Beet Farm**, Millville, Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **JUNE 27—WEI Organic Farm School: Enhancing Farms & Communities through Biological Diversity** (*see June 13*)
- **JULY—LSP Local Foods Marketing Transportation Workshop**, southeast Minn. (*see page 27*)
- **JULY—LSP Holistic Management Biological Monitoring field day class**, western Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **JULY—LSP Holistic Management Land Planning field day class**, western Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **JULY 7—SWROC Organic Field Day**, Lambertton, Minn.; Contact: <http://swroc.cfans.umn.edu>; 507-752-7372
- **JULY 8—West Central Research & Outreach Center Summer Field Day**, Morris, Minn.; Contact: <http://wcroc.cfans.umn.edu>; 320-589-1711
- **JULY 9—Summer Grazing Farm Beginnings Field Day**, Kellogg, Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **JULY 10—LSP southeast Minnesota Summer Celebration of Food, Family & Farming**, Linda Dahl farm, Altura, Minn.; Contact: 507-523-3366; lpse@landstewardshipproject.org
- **JULY 11—WEI Organic Farm School: Sustainable Farming Systems & Their Compatibility with Immigrant & Minority Populations** (*see June 13*)
- **JULY 16—SFA Minnesota Festival of Farms** (*various locations*); Contact: www.sfa-mn.org; 763-260-0209
- **JULY 18—WEI Organic School: High Fructose Corn Syrup Trail** (*see June 13*)
- **JULY 27 or 28—LSP Twin Cities sum-**

mer potluck/celebration, Minneapolis, Minn. (*details to be announced*); Contact: Mike McMahon, 612-722-6377; mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org

- **JULY 28—West Central Research & Outreach Center Horticulture Night**, Morris, Minn.; Contact: <http://wcroc.cfans.umn.edu>; 320-589-1711
- **JULY 30—Beginning Farmer Trouble Shooting FB Field Day**, East Henderson Farm, Henderson, Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **AUG. 1—Registration deadline for 2011-2012 session of LSP's Farm Beginnings program**; (*see page 16*)
- **AUG. 13—6th Annual Minn. Garlic Festival**, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org; 320-543-3394
- **AUG. 30—2011 Minnesota Cooks Event, Minnesota State Fair**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: www.minnesotacooks.net; 651-639-1223
- **SEPT. 10—18th Annual Harvest Festival & Energy Fair**, Bayfront Park, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: www.lssfa.org; 715-209-0370
- **SEPT. 10-12—Growing Power's National-International Urban & Small Farm Conference**, Milwaukee, Wis.; Contact: www.growingpowerfarmconference.org; 414-527-1546
- **SEPT. 17—Fall Grazing-Winter Preparation Farm Beginnings Field Day**, Morris, Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **SEPT. 25—Fall Grazing-Winter Preparation Farm Beginnings Field Day**, La Crescent, Minn. (*see page 16*)
- **OCT. 29—LSP Farm Beginnings Hutchinson, Minn., course begins** (*see page 16*)
- **NOV. 5—LSP Farm Beginnings course in Rochester, Minn., begins** (*see page 16*)

Check www.landstewardshipproject.org for the latest on upcoming events.